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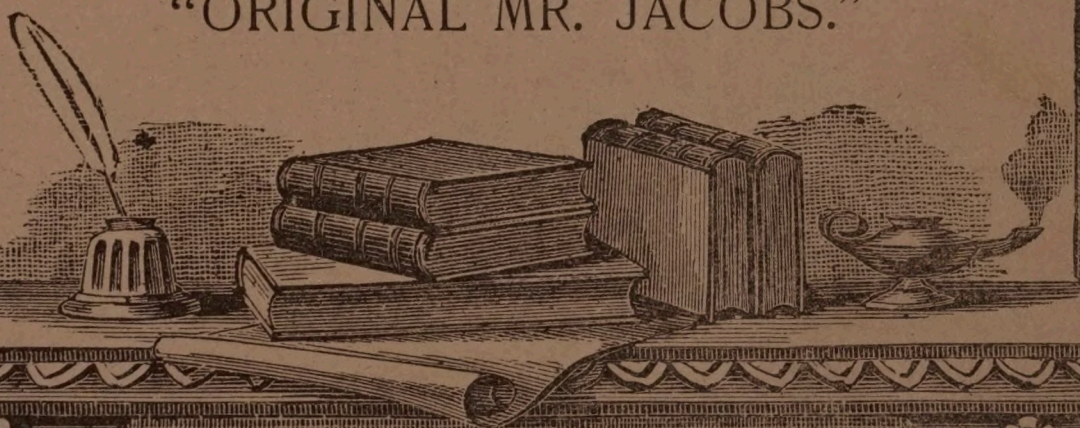
A Stirring Novel

FOR

His Brother's Sake.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE

"ORIGINAL MR. JACOBS."



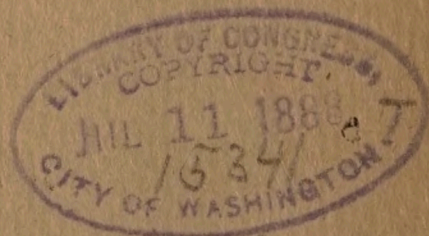
J. S. OGILVIE, PUBLISHER,
57 ROSE STREET, NEW YORK;
79 WABASH AVENUE, CHICAGO.

FOR
HIS BROTHER'S SAKE

BY THE AUTHOR OF
The Original Mr. Jacobs.

S. S. Samayens

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1888

FOR HIS BROTHER'S SAKE

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

ON the 20th of November, 187—, at about six o'clock in the evening, a hired cab stopped in front of a certain club-house in Paris, and a well-dressed man jumped out, signed to the driver to go away and hurried into the house.

Having, with the aid of the attendants, divested himself of his overcoat, he went into a large apartment which was almost deserted, and from this passed at once into the room given over to baccarat, where nearly all the members of the club were gathered. The new comer was almost in the prime of life, tall, and of a dark complexion.

"There is the Count de Bussine," said one member.

"I knew he would come," said another, "for he

lost heavily last night ; he hopes to repair his losses, I suppose." The last speaker's name was Amelin, and his companion was Laflens, a very clever young lawyer whose prospects in life would have been brilliant but for his love of high play.

"I do not believe that his luck will change," said Laflens ; "if he takes the deal, I shall go for him."

"Why, you vowed yesterday that you would never play again," cried Amelin.

"Yes," said the other drily ; "but I have released myself from that oath," and leaving his companion he sauntered toward the table.

There were to be a great many players that night, for, behind those occupying the usual twelve chairs, men were standing three and four deep, all crowding toward the table, eager to see the cards, and throw down their stakes. The board was covered with counters both red and white, made of mother-of-pearl, of ivory, or of common bone, some representing fifty *louis*, some twenty-five, some a hundred *francs*, and others only one *louis*. Gold, silver, and bank notes were also to be seen ; but of these there were not many, for most players preferred to buy counters before the game began and have them exchanged again for money when it was over.

This transformation of gold into ivory, and of paper into mother-of-pearl, was a very convenient arrangement for all parties, as it simplified the

counting of the stakes and made the game go very fast. It also had the effect of increasing the amount of the stakes, for it seems a less serious matter to throw down a handful of counters than to risk a banknote—although one knows that the two values are identical.

Just as the Count de Bussine came into the room, the banker seated himself at the table and said in a loud voice:

“Your stakes, gentlemen.”

This was followed by a deluge of counters of all denominations, and then the Count asked suddenly:

“How much is there in the bank?”

“As much as you wish,” was the reply; “the bank is open.”

“Then I stake five hundred *louis*,” said the Count in an agitated voice; and as he spoke he took from his pocketbook ten 1,000 franc notes and threw them down on the table.

“No more bets,” said the banker.”

“No more bets!” echoed the croupier obediently.

The banker now dealt two cards to the right, two the left, and then two to himself. There were nearly fortythousand francs on the table, and a sudden silence followed the eager chattering of the players, for all felt that the game was a very important one.

The banker looked cautiously at his hand and then said :

"I will give cards;" and the others breathed more freely, knowing that he had neither an eight spot nor a nine. The *tableau* on which de Bussine had staked refused cards, but the other side did not and was awarded a court card, and then the banker hesitated a minute. All the players watched him anxiously, wondering what he would do.

"What are the stakes?" he asked of the croupier, who glanced around rapidly and replied:

"About eighty thousand francs on the first *tableau*, fifteen thousand on the other."

"I will draw," said the banker, and turned up a three spot.

"I am eight!" he cried, showing his hand. Both sides had lost, and all the counters and money including de Bussine's bank notes were swept away by the croupier's rake.

"Did you stake?" asked Amelin of the lawyer.

"No, thank Heaven," replied Laflens "I was just going to risk a few louis when I saw de Bussine lay down his ten thousand francs, and as I have great faith in his ill-luck I quietly put my money back in my pocket. I will only play against that man; I will wait until he takes the deal."

"You will not wait long, the bank is going to be put up at auction, and he is sure to bid." It was true, for after a few more passes the cards were exhausted and sweeping the money into a large basket left the table. The croupier immediately opened a new pack of cards and put the bank up at auction; after a few bids it was awarded to de Bussine, who took the banker's place, drew out two more thousand franc notes from his pocketbook, and then proceeded to deal. At first he was very lucky, more than doubling the amount of his bank; but soon this was entirely changed, and he lost so much that he was obliged to replenish the bank. His face grew paler and paler, his eyes became fixed, his lips parched, so that he could hardly speak. If his adversaries had been capable of pity they would have been sorry for him; but they only laughed and talked, rattling their counters as they gathered them in, like a flock of crows cawing and chattering around a corpse. At last the banker won a trifling sum, and at that moment a servant leaned over him and said that some one wanted him in the ante-room.

"Leave me alone!" cried the banker, furiously; but in a few minutes the man returned with a message hastily written on a scrap of paper. "Come home, your wife is dying," it read, and

de Bussine glanced at it and then said to the servant :

“Tell him to go, I will follow him.”

The person who brought the message to the Count and awaited his reply was named Petit-homme (Littleman), and never was name less appropriate to its owner. Mr. Petit-homme was as tall as a drum-major, with broad, square shoulders, herculean limbs, and feet and hands in proportion. But, strange to say, his head was as small as a child's, and was ornamented with tiny ears, eyes and nose, and from his tiny mouth issued a thin, shrill voice. When he spoke, it seemed as if his voice had been sonorous enough when starting, but having such a long journey from his chest to his mouth had become weak and exhausted on the way. But in spite of these peculiarities, he was a very imposing sight, and when he declared his intention of forcing his way to the Count de Bussine's presence, the servants of the club thought that it would be easier to carry his message than to prevent his entrance into the card-room. When he heard, in reply to his written appeal, that he was to go home and the Count would soon follow him, he hesitated, and seemed half inclined to carry out his threat ; but, like most giants, Mr. Petit-homme was as mild in disposition as a lamb—or as his own voice. He was naturally timid, and knowing his great strength,

stood in constant dread of breaking something or hurting some one if he allowed himself to get excited.

So, prudently making no further remark, he turned on his great heel and left the clubhouse, to the no small relief of the attendants, and, on reaching the street, looked about him for a cab. Suddenly, however, he pulled out his watch and, seeing that it was an hour after midnight and that he would therefore be charged extra fare, he decided to walk home. In a short time he reached a large apartment-house, and going up to the third story, opened a door which was already unlocked as if some one were expected. In the hall stood his wife, candle in hand.

"You here yet?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I thought I might be wanted," replied Madame Petit-homme; "and there was no use in my going to bed. I should not be able to sleep until you were safe at home, and the oil would be wasting."

In return for this expression of combined affection and economy, Mr. Petit-homme stooped toward his wife, took her round the waist in his hands, raised her as lightly as if she were a bundle of straw, and when her face reached the level of his, pressed two kisses on her cheek. It would have been almost an impossibility for him to stoop as far as her forehead without first lifting her from

the ground, for Cæsarina Petit-homme was as diminutive in stature as her husband was colossal. Nature, when modeling these two beings, must have been in a mood for producing contrasts, for while giving to Cornelius a large body and a small head, she had put upon Cæsarina's dwarfish shoulders an immense head and a wide mouth, and had, moreover, completed the joke by endowing her with a full deep contralto voice. The result was that when this strange pair were conversing together, a listener in the next room would mistake the shrill, piping voice of the big husband for the deep, gruff tones of the little wife.

Since their marriage day thirty-five years ago, Cornelius and Cæsarina had been a devotedly attached pair, holding on every subject the same opinions, thinking the same thoughts, and obeying the same will—Cæsarina's will.

Just as Mr. Petit-homme put his wife down on her feet again, a room door opened, and a girl of about fifteen years came into the hall. On seeing Cornelius she asked eagerly :

"Have you found my father? Why did he not come with you?"

"I do not know, Miss Susanne," replied Cornelius, evasively; "I suppose he was busy."

"Busy!" repeated the girl; "but did you tell

him that mother is very ill, and that she wants him at once?"

"Yes, Miss, I did; and he will come directly, I promise you. He said he would follow me."

"Thanks," she answered, sadly, and then added, "do go up-stairs now, my good friends. Cæsarina must be tired out. Go and rest, and if we need you again I will send for you."

"Oh no, Miss Susanne, we are very well here. What is the use of going to bed,—it will soon be morning. Will it not, Cornelius?" said Cæsarina, and her husband echoed her words as was his custom.

"Then go into the drawing-room, where it is comfortable. There is tea on the table," said Susanne, and bidding them good-night she went slowly into the parlor, threw herself into a large chair, and burst into tears.

Her momentary courage and forced self-possession had left her, for the poor child had never known sorrow until now.

"I have no father," she sobbed; "for if I had he would be here. Mamma will die and I shall be all alone—all alone."

For a few minutes she wept bitterly yet quietly, for fear of being heard, and then suddenly her tears ceased. Children's tears, like summer showers, are copious, but soon dried, and always with the blue sky just behind the clouds.

"He will come home. He said he would come soon," she told herself reassuringly ; "and mamma will be better to-morrow."

Then, seized with a desire to return to her mother's side, she sprang up and, dipping her handkerchief into a glass of water that stood on a marble table, she went over to a large mirror and began bathing her eyes to remove the traces of tears. Never did looking-glass reflect a fairer image than the young face of Susanne, in whom all the graces of childhood were combined with many maidenly charms. Her loose hair, of a warm blonde tint, waved and curled about her bright face; her delicate features, dimpled cheeks, and great blue eyes all gave promise that one day the pretty child would be a woman of rare beauty. But Susanne was still a child, for in spite of her heavy heart and recent tears she did not leave the mirror without nodding smilingly at her own image. Then becoming sad again, she went on tip-toe to the room where her mother lay ill, and opened the door softly.

A man who was seated in an arm chair turned toward her and made her a sign not to speak; but while she stood not daring to move, a voice from the bed exclaimed faintly, "I am not asleep;" adding after a moment, "Is that you, George?" Susanne now went to her mother's side, saying:

"He has not come yet, mamma, but he said he would be here soon."

The sick woman sighed wearily, and then said:
"Lucian, come nearer."

The man rose from his chair and took her hand gently as he answered:

"I am here, Henriette."

"I must speak with you alone, brother," she said. "Susanne go to your room and rest a little. I will have you called in an hour, I promise you."

The girl, seeing that the moment was a solemn one, stooped over her mother without speaking, pressed a fond kiss upon her forehead, and went out of the room with tears springing anew to her eyes.

CHAPTER II.

As soon as they were alone Lucian began to remonstrate gently with the sick woman, reminding her that the doctor had ordered perfect quiet.

"Do not talk now, try to sleep, and if you are stronger to-morrow——"

"There is no to-morrow for me," she said; "I shall die to-night. I feel it coming," and she laid her hand on her chest. "Another paroxysm like the last one will carry me off, and I must speak now while I can."

"But surely George ought to hear you. Wait until he comes."

"George will not come."

"But they found him and told him that you were ill."

"His love for me is not as strong as it is for his terrible vice——"

"Vice, what vice?"

"Gambling," she answered with a sigh.

"He!" exclaimed the other; "my brother George a gambler?"

"Yes, Lucian, and it is that that is killing me."

"Why have you never told me before? I would have reasoned with him."

"There was no use in distressing you about him. You could not have influenced him. I did all I could, I entreated him to give it up, and at last I even told Susanne to try. She put her arms about his neck and in her sweet voice begged him to stay at home with us. He stayed, but he was restless and unhappy; and when she had gone to bed, he grew nervous and impatient, and at last left home in a sort of frenzy and did not come back until the next morning. And yet I kept hoping for the best. He is not bad, but weak. We have been happy together for many years, and it is only a few months since he gave way to this dreadful passion. He lost money and wished to win it back, and our little fortune is gone."

"Gone!" said her listener in dismay; "he has lost all your money?"

"Not mine, but Susanne's—I had nothing," replied the mother. "It was the money that you made over to him when we married; you gave him all your share of your father's fortune, you loved him so well."

"Ah, yes; I loved my poor brother," said "Lucian, not only because he was my brother whom I had seen grow up from infancy, and to whom I had been a sort of father; it was not alone for that I loved him, but for the sake of one still more dear—our mother. I was twenty years old when she called me to her bedside, as you have called me, and asked me to promise to take care of my little brother. She said that she was going to meet my father, and that her last moments here would be less bitter if I would promise to be a father and a mother, a friend and a guardian, to her younger boy. I knelt beside her and held her hand and promised to devote my life to my brother, and if need be *to sacrifice myself for him*. She would have stopped me there, but the oath was taken, and I have kept it. I shall keep it to the end."

In the intensity of his feelings Lucian had almost forgotten his listener, who lay silently watching him with a smile of admiration on her face.

When he stopped speaking, she said, earnestly ;
“You are good and strong and noble. Can you, will you, take another oath?”

“What is it?” asked the brother-in-law.

“Like your mother,” she said, speaking with greater difficulty, “I ask you to make my last moments less bitter by promising me—,” she put her hands to her chest again, then took hold of her listener’s hand and said, solemnly, “Promise that you will love my child as you love your brother, and that you will protect her”

“I love Susanna already as if she were my daughter,” he answered, and then seeing an imploring look on the mother’s face he added, softly, “and as my mission seems to be to devote myself to others, I promise to sacrifice myself, if need be, for little Susanne.”

“Thanks!” said the dying woman, smiling on him radiantly.

Just then the door opened softly, and Henriette looked up, hoping to see at last the husband whom she still loved in spite of all. But it was Susanne that entered, and her mother laid the girl’s hand in Lucian’s, whispering “Trust to your uncle and obey him in all things, my child, he is your noble, faithful friend.——”

Her head fell back on the pillow, and she could say no more.

CHAPTER III.

WHILE his wife was dying, George de Bussine was playing Baccarat. He was just beginning to win when Petit-homme came for him, and as it was the first time that fortune had smiled on him he would not leave. But he soon found that she had been only coquetting with him so as to induce him to stay, and his entire winnings suddenly disappeared at one stroke. Then he played on in desperation, and when his last bank note was gone, called on the house to advance him some money. This was not refused, although he was already in debt, for he was a good customer, always staked high, and kept up the interest of the play. As the night wore on the aspect of the players was gradually changed; at first they had been very numerous, noisy and animated, making a brilliant fascinating scene;—it was a terrible one no doubt, yet not devoid of a certain grandeur.

But when the players grew tired of the excitement, or were forced to stop for want of funds, when the lights began to pale, and the few persons who remained were silent, heavy-eyed, and languid, putting down their stakes and gathering in their gains mechanically, then the scene became a sad, a hideous, a loathsome one. The Count de Bussine had given up all hope of re-

pairing his losses, for the principal winners had gone away carrying his money with them, yet he played on, his hands cold and stiff, his face livid, his teeth set. The other players watched him languidly, and kept enriching themselves from his losses. They looked more and more like a flock of carrion crows bent on devouring a corpse. And yet George de Bussine continued to play, for in truth he dared not stop. He dreaded to put down the cards and reflect upon the night's doings, to think of his losses, his utter ruin, to be alone with his remorse in the silent streets at day-break. So when a player would have stopped, the count exclaimed almost imploringly:

"A little longer—just one more," and out of pity the game went on. Small tables were brought to the winners, and strong hot coffee served by the sleepy waiters, but the *Chef* had long since gone to bed, fearing, perhaps, that the luckless de Bussine would want to borrow again. At last he was entirely *cleaned out*, as the saying is, not a *sou* remained to him—the crows had finished up the corpse and picked the bones. The players rose yawning, put on their overcoats, and dispersed, most of them sauntering away without a word, but some stopping to speak to de Bussine and condole with him over his dire bad fortune.

"What infernal luck you've had to-night," said one; "you will never play again, I suppose?"

“Nonsense,” said another, “you will make up for it to-morrow;” and then they all left him and amused themselves by calculating how much he had lost.

George de Bussine made no reply to his sympathizers, and when they had disappeared, got up slowly from his seat, took his coat and hat from the waiters who stood around longing to see him go, and walked out into the street like one in a dream. It was a cold morning, and a fine drizzling rain made the sidewalks sticky. De Bussine thought of his dying wife, but he had also other thoughts in his head and these made him direct his steps toward the quay, where the Seine awaited him. But suddenly he changed his mind and went to his home; he would see his wife once more—Henriette, with her dying breath would pardon him.

As he entered the room he heard the death rattle, but his wife saw him, knew him, and opened her lips to speak. He hastened toward her, but it was too late. With her glazing eyes fixed upon his face, she sighed, and was no more.

Susanne was kneeling at her mother's bedside, sobbing and praying; her uncle Lucian leaned against the chimney-piece, looking from her to the dead face, and tears of compassion gathered in his eyes. A little farther off, George de Bussine sat with his elbows on his knees and his chin in

his hands ; he was looking straight before him like one stupified.

The brothers were very much alike in personal appearance, of the same height and figure, the same cast of features, and the same gait and bearing ; so that, although George was more than ten years younger than Lucian, they looked to be about the same age. No doubt George was aged by the life he led, the nights of feverish excitement, the days of dull despair, for the lines in his face were deeper, and his whole manner less buoyant than his elder brother's.

Lucian's face expressed excessive kindliness of heart and warmth of feeling, joined to steadfastness of purpose that even amounted to sternness ; while in George there was mere soft-heartedness and weakness, with no decision of character, no self-control.

A half hour passed and the silence was unbroken, save by the sobs of the young girl, and then her uncle, raising her gently, bade her go and rest for a little while.

"You may come back as soon as Madame Petit-homme has performed her last service for your dear mother," he said, leading her to the door.

Cæsarina and another friend of Henriette, were waiting in the passage, and when Lucian and Susanne had left the room, George, too, rose hastily

and fled as if he feared the cold white face on the pillow. The uncle was in the parlor, giving the necessary directions to Mr. Petit-homme, and George entered the room staggering, and with a face of leaden hue.

Lucian spoke a few words of consolation to his brother, and then promised to return directly he had left word at the office about his enforced absence.

"Your office—you are going to your office?" repeated George, wildly.

"I must," said Lucian, smiling. "A bank cashier, you know, is not his own master."

The other man dropped almost fainting into a chair, and his brother hastened to the bank.

Lucian had been for many years connected with the Stock Exchange, but his nature was so unsuspecting and confiding that he had lost, through his clients, large sums of money, and he therefore thought it advisable to accept the more humble position of cashier, which was offered him by a banker in the Boulevard Haussmann. He had been in this house for two years, and had so far won the esteem and confidence of Mr. Robins, his employer, that the latter, when obliged to leave Paris, delegated to him full authority in the business of the bank.

He was now away from home, and therefore Lucian thought it necessary to be at his post punct-

tually in spite of the death of his brother's wife.

He was obliged to stop at his apartment, however, to find his keys, for he had been summoned to his sister-in-law's death-bed so suddenly, the day before, that he had left them on his mantelpiece, and had not thought of them again.

As soon as he reached his "bachelor's quarters," his old servant told him that his brother had come to see him the night before.

"Why did you not tell him that his wife was ill, and that I had gone to her?" asked Lucian.

"I did not know it, sir," replied the man; "your brother waited for you a little while and then left suddenly, but came back in about an hour, stayed a minute or two in the parlor, and then went away."

Lucian attached but little importance to this matter. His brother had called on him at his office early in the afternoon to borrow some money, but had not succeeded in this; and so, no doubt, had come in the evening to his brother's home to try again.

"Poor fellow, he wants to gamble again," said Lucian, with a sigh; and then, taking the bunch of keys from the mantelpiece, he went to the bank.

He had not been at his desk many minutes, and was reading a letter of instructions from his employer, who was in London, when one of the oldest employés of the house looked in, and exclaimed,

"You here so early? I thought you would be late to-day, after working all night."

"I was not here last night," said the cashier, in surprise, and the other said smilingly :

"That is strange. I passed here at half-past ten and saw you going in; I would have spoken to you but that I had my wife and daughter with me."

"You must have mistaken some one else for me," said Lucian shaking his head; and then going on with his letter. Old Cabart went away muttering, "Very strange, very strange. We all saw him. But there, what reason could he have for denying it?"

Mr. Robins, in his letter, informed the cashier that he would return home the next day at about three in the afternoon, and reminded Lucian that there was a payment of 80,000 francs to be made the same morning. For this purpose there was more than enough money in the safe. The cashier, as he intended to absent himself from business for the rest of the day, thought it would be well to get this money ready for the next day, and unlocking the safe, he took out a large green portfolio and opened it. As he did so his brain reeled. The notes were gone!

He seized another portfolio from the safe, thinking he had put the money in it by mistake, but in vain; he searched through every envelope

and package, and all over the safe; there were deeds and bills and letters, but the notes were gone. Could he have made an error in his accounts? He looked over his books and found everything correct; moreover, the rest of the money in the safe, gold and silver, was all there as he had left it—nothing was missing but the banknotes. One hundred thousand francs entirely gone, vanished from out of that safe of which he alone had the key! How could it have been taken? It was a combination lock, and no one knew the word excepting Mr. Robins and the cashier. Lucian examined the lock thoroughly and found it in perfect order; there was not the slightest sign of its having been tampered with.

CHAPTER IV.

It was evident that some who knew the combination had opened the safe and taken the money. But then it followed that the same person must have had possession of the key. Mr. Robins' cashier reflected, and ran over in his mind all the employés of the bank, but remembered that he himself had been the last person there on the previous afternoon, and that he had counted the bank-

notes, put them in the safe, and locked them up. This was done after every one else had gone home, and he had then put his key in his pocket and gone to his rooms. Who was there who knew the combination? Some one may possibly have discovered it by accident, but there was no one present when he locked the safe; and, besides, who could have had the key? True, Lucian had left them behind him in his hurry to go to his sister-in-law, but no one except his old servant would have seen them, and he did not know the combination. Had any one else been in his apartments? No one, except his poor brother for a few minutes, and certainly no one connected with the bank. Lucian pondered, and suddenly he recollected that George had called to see him at the office to borrow money, that while he was there the safe was not locked, that the combination word was plainly visible. Must he suspect his brother? Oh for shame, for shame! Some one else had discovered the combination—perhaps old Cabart. And the keys, who but his servant could have taken them from the mantelpiece? There was a conspiracy, that was it.

But suddenly the cashier thought of his brother's two visits, with an hour's interval—next he recalled what old Cabart had said about having seen Lucian going into the bank at half-past ten. The two brothers were so much alike! Lucian groaned.

and covered his face as he thought of how he had seen his brother last ; pale, trembling, despairing ; of how George had shuddered as he cried, " You are going to your office ? "

It was perfectly clear George was not wicked, but he was weak, and he had lost everything by gambling.

The cashier locked the safe again and left the office. As he passed Cabart he said, in a voice which was far from firm :

" I shall not be able to come back to-day. Put some one in my place. "

" Will you be here to-morrow ? "

" Certainly, " said Lucian, flushing painfully ; " why should I not ? What do you mean ? "

" Oh, nothing, " returned Cabart ; " only that if you want a holiday, I am quite capable of replacing you. Mr. Robins thought I was too old for the position, but I am in his confidence, and I know there is a large sum to be paid to-morrow. " He spoke with all the bitterness of jealousy, and his last words sounded like a knell in Lucian's ears. " Give me the key of the safe and I will attend to the payment. "

" It will not be necessary, I shall be here, " replied the cashier.

Once out in the air he recovered himself a little, and was able to view the situation calmly. His first duty, he knew, was to telegraph to his em-

ployer, and to notify the police, but this last move would be to ruin his brother. No, he would not do it; he would wait till Mr. Robins came home, and, meanwhile, he would go and see George.

During his walk Lucian persuaded himself that his brother was not the guilty one; his own honor and uprightness, as well as his brotherly affection cried out against the thought, and it was with a lighter heart that he went up to George's apartments.

He found only Madame Petit-homme and Susanne in the chamber of death.

As he entered, the girl rose to greet him, and leading him toward the bed, whispered:

"Is she not beautiful? See how she smiles!"

After a long pause, he asked:

"Where is your father?"

"I do not know," said Susanne, kneeling down again at the side of the bed, and Madame Petit-homme, having heard the question, answered it by saying:

"He went to his room soon after you left, and we have not seen him since."

Lucian went to his brother's room, thinking compassionately, "he wished to mourn in solitude, poor George!"

The door was locked, and there was no answer to his gentle rapping. He knocked more loudly but all was silent. Then a sudden fear came over

him. "Can he be dead?" The thought of despair and suicide filled him with terror and he rattled the doorknob, calling loudly; still there was no sound. Then he discovered that the door-key was so turned that by stooping he could look through the key-hole into the room, and after peering in for a minute anxiously, he saw the figure of his brother on the bed. He was stretched out at full length, but his regularly rising and falling breath showed that he merely slept!

Losing patience at last, Lucian pounded violently upon the door until the heavy sleeper was awakened.

"Who is there?" said George, faintly.

"It is I, Lucian, let me in."

In a few minutes the door was opened, and the brothers stood looking at each other; George was pale to lividness, and his lips trembled nervously, when his brother, filled with fresh suspicion, demanded sternly where he had been on the previous evening while his dying wife was waiting for him.

"Where was I?" he repeated, stammering. "Petit-homme found me—he can tell you."

"I can guess," said Lucian; "you were at cards—you are a gambler."

George lowered his eyes and made no answer, for he saw that denial would be useless. Lucian went on,

"You came to my office yesterday afternoon and said you had no money. What did you gamble with?"

"I borrowed from a friend."

"What friend? Tell me his name."

"I will not answer your questions," said George, suddenly; "what right have you to catechise me?"

"Every right," returned the other; "you are my child. Have I not been father and mother and every thing to you? I have been two indulgent, alas! in allowing you to live in idleness. I humored every caprice in you, encouraged every whim. Even when you found the name of Bussine on some old deeds of our family and chose to add it to our own, *Lecomte*, I only smiled at your folly, and you became *Le compte Bussine* instead of simply *George Lecomte*; and when strangers addressed you as *Le comte Bussine* you accepted the title and let them think you were a count. Foolish fellow that you were, I loved you only too well. You say you borrowed money. Very well; then what did you come to my rooms for at ten o'clock and again an hour after? Quick, there is no time to lose. Answer!"

"Why should I answer?"

"Because I accuse you."

"Of what?" said George, calmly.

"Of having opened the safe in my office, and

stolen employer's money. Say you did not do it. Oh, George, say you did not!"

"I did not do it."

Lucian's face brightened and he exclaimed, joyfully.

"Then there is nothing to fear, I will notify the police."

But as he spoke he caught sight of his brother's face, and turned toward him again, exclaiming: "You stole the money!"

George made no reply, though Lucian paused hoping to hear him deny indignantly the dreadful charge.

"Ah, wretched man!" cried the elder brother; "what have you done? How did you fall so low? You have ruined us!"

"How can I explain," said George at last; "how can you understand all my hopes, my disappointments, my struggles, my despair?"

"Yet tell me all," said Lucian. "I must know all, from the moment that this terrible vice became your master."

"Two years ago," said George, obediently, "I began to gamble, I was mad to grow rich suddenly, the thought took firm hold of me, the desire possessed me like a fiend. I said that I would stop playing when I had made a modest fortune, but when I found that I was losing all, I dared not stop. I was ruined, my wife and child were des-

titute, and I played merely to regain my own, to have justice from those who had robbed me. I won a little sometimes, but the next day I was sure to lose more than double my gains. I borrowed from every one, and yet I lost."

He stopped, and looked at his brother piteously, and the latter uttered no reproach. Though Lucian had no passion so absorbing as his strong, self-sacrificing affection, though he could not by any possibility understand the criminal weakness of the gambler; yet, as he listened to the recital, he felt more than ever drawn to his wretched brother, and his heart overflowed with pity for his misery.

"I struggled on," continued George, "and at last applied to you for money; but you were pinched yourself, you said, and could not lend the sum I wanted. While you talked to me you were arranging your papers in the safe, and I saw you put in a case full of notes. I was not paying special attention to that, but suddenly I caught sight of the combination word, the four letters were plainly displayed in the lock of the safe. You know what those letters spell. It is GAIN! Ah, why did ill-luck put that fatal word before me? I was convinced that my lucky star had risen, that it was through you indirectly—you, who had always been my guardian angel, that I should retrieve my fortunes and win back my

money. That magic word seemed to promise me success, triumph, wealth untold. All I needed was capital, and there it was awaiting me behind the magic pass-word GAIN. The letters seemed to smile at me and say, 'Try once more you will win everything to-night,' He stopped and drew a long breath, but his brother did not speak. "Do not think," continued George, "that I yielded easily, even in thought, to the temptation. I struggled against it, I hurried out of the bank with you and went at once to several places and tried to raise the money; but it was useless, my credit was exhausted. I went into a restaurant, but could not eat.

"My brain was on fire and a feverish thirst attacked me; I drank more than I had ever drunk before, for I could not control my thirst. And all the time that word, that fatal GAIN, kept dancing before my eyes. I got up from the table and rushed to your apartments, intending to make another appeal; and when I found that you were not there, I went into the parlor, intending to wait for your return. But I had not been many minutes in the room when I caught sight of a bunch of keys lying on the mantelpiece, and I recognized among them the key of the bank and that of your safe where the banknotes lay. Then I was convinced that my lucky star had risen, for everything was in my favor; I had seen the combina-

tion word, and I had come to your rooms while you were out, and when you, who were always so exact, had forgotten to take your keys away with you—It seemed clearly intended that I should borrow from the safe, make a fortune, and then return the amount before it had been missed. It was the hand of fate stretched out to save me; I was so convinced of this that I hesitated no longer, but took the keys and went straight to the bank. I opened the safe, drew out the green portfolio, and stuffed the banknotes into my pockets. Then I drove to the club, and sat down to Baccarat.”

He stopped again as if unable to go on, and his brother, speaking in a tone of grief, of pity, said, softly: “When they told you that your wife was dying, and wished to see you, why did you not stop playing? Did not the thought of her who loved you destroy your frenzy?”

“The frenzy was already gone,” George answered. “I had lost heavily, and I realized the fatal consequences of my guilt. Ah, brother, I was not playing then, I was fighting for you and for myself. I knew that Henriette was dying, but I dreaded her death less than her reproaches; I thought she stood before me, pale and weak, and whispered, ‘You have killed your wife, you have ruined your brother, you have disgraced your child!’”

After a long pause, Lucian asked :

“Did you lose all the money?”

“All!” returned the other in a low voice.

“And you have no means of replacing it? Can you not borrow from any one?”

“No; there is no one to help me.”

“Then I must try. Unfortunately, I have only a few hours, and to-morrow morning——”

He stopped suddenly, for he would not reproach his brother.

“Go to your wife’s room and pray for us both,” he said.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER speaking with Lucian about the arrangements for the funeral, Mr. Petit-homme went up to his little apartment on the fifth story. He rang the bell and waited, for getting into his domicile was not such a simple matter as one would suppose. After a minute Cæsarina’s deep voice was heard inquiring :

“Who’s there?”

“It is I, Cornelius,” replied her husband in his high soprano, but this was not enough.

Cæsarina opened a tiny panel in the door and looked out cautiously; and when she had seen her husband and made sure that it was not a stranger

imitating his voice, she let down the iron chain, drew back two large bolts, turned the key, and at last opened the door.

What was the cause of all this? Could such precaution be necessary in broad daylight, in a well-appointed house in the heart of Paris? Was Cæsarina, fearful lest some unwelcome admirer might, in her husband's absence, make his way to her presence? That was not likely, for Madame Petit-homme was fifty years old if she was a day, and, besides that, she was not particularly attractive with her big head and wide mouth. Perhaps she was afraid of burglars; yet it seemed hardly probable that any thief would climb up to that humble little apartment on the fifth floor. What would he find in those three little rooms, except cheap furniture and pewter dishes, and a wardrobe of the plainest material? And yet there was one object in the midst of these humble surroundings which would have attracted attention. Between the windows of the tiny parlor, which served also as dining-room, was an iron-bound box fastened to the wall, and closed securely with bands and padlocks, and this chest contained deeds, bonds, and banknotes, in short, a good-sized fortune.

Cornelius Petit-homme had in early youth been office boy to Mr. Lecomte, George and Lucian's father, who was in the Civil Service. Many years

after his marriage to Cæsarina he bought a share in the Credit Foncier of France; this cost him only five hundred francs, and eighteen months later he was informed that his number had won a prize of five hundred thousand francs! It seemed an immense fortune to those two, who had never before owned as much as five hundred francs at a time; they laughed with joy, they fell into each other's arms, and exclaimed: "We are rich! we are rich!"

Yet, strange to say, they made no difference in their manner of living, they bought no clothes nor furniture, they added nothing to their table, they offered no hospitality to their friends, they thought of nothing but of buying more shares and winning more prizes. Money-getting and money-saving became a passion with them; when they were poor they had been generous, but on growing rich they became misers. Cornelius resigned his position in the Civil Service office, and devoted all his time to the management of his fortune; he haunted the Exchange picking up information from one and another, buying stock, watching the fluctuations of the market, and selling at the first favorable opportunity. As he was very cautious, and was enabled by the economy of his wife to hold his shares when the market was down, he soon began to see his fortune grow, like a snowball rolling down hill.

It so happened that the Petit-hommes engaged an apartment in the same house as George Lecomte de Bussine and his family, so that they often met Lucian Lecomte, who was then in the Stock Exchange, and was able to give them valuable advice. In spite of his economical tendencies, Cornelius Petit-homme liked to have his regular meals, and this was the only subject of dispute between him and his little wife. Cæsarina ate no more than a canary bird, and she could not forgive her husband in having an appetite in proportion to his size.

"You will ruin us if you eat so much," she often said to him; "a man with such an appetite should dine at a *restaurent*—at *table d'hôte*. They would not make much from your custom, but that is their lookout."

Cornelius, always brave when fighting for his stomach, kissed his wife as he entered the apartment, drew the bolts carefully, and then remarked that it must be dinner time.

"No, indeed, it is much too early," answered Cæsarina.

"But it is late for breakfast, and I have had nothing to-day, my dear."

"Well, since it is late for breakfast and early for dinner, we had better have neither," said the thrifty housewife."

"But I am empty, empty," persisted Cornelius,

and to his wife muttered remark that his capacity was a disgrace to him, he answered nothing, for he knew that Cæsarina was bound to have the last word, and that a discussion would only delay the arrival of the viands. Madame Petit-homme, who was really fond of her giant, opened a cupboard without more ado and brought out the meal. This did not take long to do, for there was only one dish, and it consisted of a roast chicken, or rather the remains of a fowl which had been begun three days before.

"Again!" cried Cornelius, involuntarily; and then he added in a hesitating tone, "there is hardly anything on these bones."

His wife looked at him impatiently, and from him to the chicken, and then, seeing that the meal was indeed a very slender one for so big a man, she relented so far as to promise him a cup of coffee when he had finished eating. This encouraged him to attack the bird, and when it was entirely demolished, he said cheerfully:

"Now, my dear, I am ready for the coffee."

"What coffee?" asked his wife.

"Why the cup of coffee you promised me."

"Pooh! I only said that to encourage you to eat the chicken, and now that you have finished it, you do not need any encouragement."

Cornelius was meditating on the truth of this

remark, when some one knocked at the front door of the apartment.

Cæsarina went through the usual ceremony of opening the panel, letting down the chain, drawing the bolts, turning the key, and at last opening the door and admitting the visitor. It was Lucian Lecomte. He was ushered into the little parlor where Cornelius sat eyeing sadly the fragments of the chicken, which Madame Petit-homme hastened to remove, apologizing meanwhile to the visitor for her husband's inordinate love of eating.

"Does Miss Susanne want me?" asked Cornelius.

"No indeed," replied Lucian; "I have come up here entirely on my own account. I want to ask a very great service of you."

"Of us! We shall be delighted, Mr. Lucian," said Cæsarina.

"Delighted," echoed Cornelius. "What is it?"

"I have had a serious misfortune," began Lucian, "and only the death of my sister-in-law prevented my telling you of it before."

He hesitated, for he was not practised in the art of falsehood, and he must shield his brother at all hazards.

"I have lost a large sum of money belonging to Mr. Robins——"

"Oh, Mr. Lucian, how terrible!" cried his listeners.

"I took it out of the safe to make a payment,

and whether I dropped it in the street, or had my pocket picked, I cannot say; but the money is gone."

"How much was it?" asked Madame Petithomme breathlessly.

"One hundred and ten thousand francs."

"Good heavens!" cried Cæsarina and Cornelius, "what will you do? Have you reported it to the police, or will you advertise?"

"That would be no use," said Lucian, shaking his head sadly; "I could not possibly recover it in time, for I must make a large payment to-morrow morning. If the money is not forthcoming, they will blame me; and perhaps, who knows, they may suspect me——"

"You! Suspect you!" screamed Cornelius; "they would not dare."

"I cannot say," returned Lucian Lecomte, "but they can hold me responsible; and if I do not make good the loss I shall be dismissed, and my career will be blighted."

The husband and wife were dumbfounded. They loved Lucian as much as their avarice would permit them to care for any one, but they could see no way out of the difficulty.

"What is to be done?" they said at last, in despairing tones.

"The only remedy is for me to replace the money."

"But how can you raise so much? Have you saved anything?"

"No, nothing. And I have but my salary."

"Have you any rich friends who could lend you as much?"

"I thought of you."

"Of us?" they exclaimed, instinctively looking towards the strong box on the wall, and Lucian went on eagerly:

"You are the only persons I know who could produce as much ready money at short notice, and I do not think you will refuse to help such an old friend as I am. Forgive me for reminding you that you made most of your money through my advice and assistance. You will not hesitate to devote a part of it to saving me from ruin."

"But we are not as rich as you suppose, Mr. Lucian," said Cæsarina, after a pause.

"Surely you have the amount I want," cried he, "or you can very quickly get it. And you will not lose the money, I will pay you back faithfully by instalments and with interest. I will have my life insured for you at once; but I am not likely to die, and Mr. Robins has talked of giving me an interest in the business. Surely you can not refuse me. Oh, if you only knew——"

He stopp'd suddenly and thought of his brother whom he must not betray. And Cæsarina, who had risen from her seat and put her arms round

the money chest as if protecting her only child said curiously :

“ If we knew what ? ”

“ If you knew what it costs me to ask this loan of you,” said Lucian, hastily.

“ It grieves us more to refuse you.”

“ You will not let me have the money ? ”

“ Alas, we can not. Can we husband ? ”

“ No”, said Cornelius, in reply to her sharp glance.

“ Why not ? ” cried the cashier; “ of what use is it to you, locked up in that chest? What pleasure does it give you? And even if you do enjoy it, you will not lose anything by lending it to me for a little while. You will have it all back, and the interest besides.”

Long he pleaded and promised, but received only sighs and shakings of the head in reply. At last, however, Cæsarina spoke, leaving the chest, and standing before him with her arms folded.

“ Mr. Lucian Lecomte, you do not understand how precious our money is to us. We became rich late in life; for many years we suffered the trials of poverty, and suddenly in our old age this fortune came to us like food to the starving. We love it as people do an only child sent them after years of waiting—with a frenzy of devotion so strong as to make up for all the lonely years

passed without it. If you had known all this you would not have asked us to part with it."

"I thought you were my friends," said Lucian.

And Cæsarina answered.

"We are your friends. We are willing and anxious to do anything to serve you; we will sacrifice our time for you, our health, our strength, even our life if necessary, we will give you anything you ask, except our money. That is the one thing that we will not part with, even to you we cannot. You do not know how we deny ourselves for our money chest. Ask my husband what sort of breakfast he has just made, within sight of our three hundred and fifty thousand francs; look at my gown, it is thin and patched, it hardly keeps out the cold, but I do not care, I would not mind freezing if I knew that the chest was full."

"What good is the money, shut up in the chest—what pleasure does it give you?"

"What pleasure! The pleasure, the rapture of looking at and feeling it, and knowing that it is our own. Every night when other people are asleep and we are sure of not being disturbed, we close all the shutters, draw the curtains, and unlock the chest. We spread our fortune on the table, and then, with spectacles on our noses and magnifying-glasses in our hands, we read all that is written on the banknotes; we decipher the small

est print; we take down the value of the bonds, we make endless calculations, until nearly the whole night is passed. This is the pleasure that our money gives us, and we are never tired of it. We will never consent to diminish our fortune by a franc."

CHAPTER VI.

LUCIAN LECOMTE saw that it was useless to fight against the avarice of his two friends. They were the Jews of the Middle Ages, dressed in modern Parisian costume; their proto-types plunged their bony fingers into heaps of glittering gold coins; but they handled and pored over paper, notes and bonds; it was all the same vicious passion, though its outward form was altered by modern civilization.

On leaving the Petithomme's apartment, Lucian went straight to his own home and pondered long over his perilous position, and it was not until nine o'clock at night that he returned to his brother. This time he found George seated near his dead wife, clasping his daughter in his arms.

Lucian looked at his brother with unabated affection in spite of all that had happened, for the love of years was not to be annihilated in a single day, the past could not be forgotten merely because

the long-loved object had proved weak and unworthy of confidence.

Upon his niece, Susanne, Lucian also looked with tenderness and pity. She was all in black, which heightened the bright bloom of her young face, and her blue eyes were suffused with tears.

Poor child ! What a sad entry into the years of womanhood ; to lose the loving confidante of her every thought, the wise and tender counsellor of her young mind and heart ! As Lucian Lecomte gazed upon those two, he recalled the promise he had made to Susanne's mother, and resolving to abide by that promise, to sacrifice himself if need be for his fair young niece, he fancied that a smile of benediction played about the lips of the dead. But time was flying, and he must hasten to carry out his plans before it was too late. He went over to his brother and said softly.

"Get up, George, I want you;" and then signing to Susanne, who was about to leave them, he said. "Stay, dear child. I want to hear your father's words so that if he ever forgets them you can remind him of this night."

Then putting his hand upon his brother's arm, he said solemnly :

"Kneel down, place your right hand upon your dead wife's head, and swear that you will never gamble, never touch a card again in all your life."

George knelt, and did as he was commanded ;

and Lucian turned again to his niece, and said :

“Remember what you have heard, my child : remember, too, your dear mother’s last injunction ; ‘trust your uncle in all things, and obey him.’ ”

The room was dimly lighted by two wax candles, the bed all draped in white, with a black crucifix hanging above it. Upon the pillow was the dead face ; here was death, the end of life, the final tableau ; close by knelt Susanne in all the radiance of youth ; it was a striking contrast.

After a long pause Lucian spoke again :

“Susanne, go and sleep. I shall call you in a few hours, and then you must bid farewell to your mother and leave this house with your father.”

“And not go to the church and the cemetery with mamma ?” said the girl in amazement.

“No, my dearest child ; it is impossible for certain reasons. You are to leave Paris, in fact, France ; you are going to take a long journey with your father.”

“But who will take care of mamma’s grave ; who will plant flowers on it ?”

“I will attend to it, I promise you.”

“And you are not coming with us ?”

“No, dear ; I cannot leave my business at present.”

Susanne cast down her eyes and said sadly :

“I know that you will take good care of mamma’s

grave; but oh, uncle Lucian, I should like to kneel and pray there, just once before I go away."

"It is absolutely necessary, for your father's happiness and for your own future, that you should leave France to-morrow," replied the uncle.

"Oh, my darling, do not question my wishes, but trust in me."

The girl remembered her mother's dying words and answered with a sigh of resignation:

"Very well, uncle, I will go."

Then she stooped, and pressed her lips to the marble face of the dead; and without speaking she turned away and went to her own room. With a bursting heart she looked round her. Every object was a souvenir of her lost mother. Here was the white bedstead that Henriette had bought when her child had outgrown the little crib; how proud Susanne had been of that bed and yet how glad to leave it every morning to creep in beside her mother. And next the bed was a dainty chair, embroidered by that same dear friend; on the mantel a clock, a present on her last birthday, and the pretty little watch she had received on the morning of her tenth birthday, all the pictures and little ornaments of the room, everything she had, recalled memories of her mother. And now she must leave them behind, she must part with them forever. But no, she would carry everything she could away with her,

and instead of going to rest, she began packing up her most precious relics, stopping every now and then to press back the welling tears.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN the brothers were alone together, Lucian said in a firm voice:

“You heard what I told Susanne. You are to leave France to-morrow, and you must begin life over again. Removed from your accustomed haunts and companions, you will be better able to resist temptation—to keep the vow you have made. You must do this for the sake of your child—for her too you must work. You are an artist, your paintings have been highly spoken of, and you have an object in making use of your talent. I remember that you once expressed a desire to visit the Orient, exclaiming that there you could become a true artist. Go there now, live in Egypt and in Tunis; the novelty of those countries will please Susanne and help her to forget her sorrow. But remember to avoid large towns, live as simply and as economically as possible, and above all, do not allow Susanne to glance at a French newspaper; this is of the highest importance.”

The other man listened, and although he could

not understand his brother's plans, made no objection or comment, but bowed his head in token of obedience.

"I will give you a few thousand francs to begin with," continued Lucian, and you must work hard to support your child. She may write to me occasionally, but her letter must always be sent to Mr. Petit-homme as I cannot tell where I may be."

"You are going to leave Paris?" said George at last.

"No, I remain here."

"Then I remain too."

"Why so?"

"Because your safe; when they discover the deficit——"

"That concerns me only," interrupted Lucian.

"But suppose they accuse you of embezzlement?"

"I shall declare my innocence. Mr. Robins will return to-morrow, and I think that he will believe me. He will allow me to make good the loss by degrees."

"But if he suspects you? I must be here to confess that I alone am the guilty one," cried the gambler.

"It is for the purpose of avoiding such a possibility that I command you to go," answered

Lucian, putting his hands on his brother's shoulders, and looking at him fixedly.

"I cannot go, Lucian, and leave you to suffer in my place."

"I forbid you to stay. I promised our mother to watch over you, and I have neglected my trust. The fault is mine, and I must take the consequences. I promised Henriette, too, to take care of her child, and I must keep my vow—I must make her happy and respected, and this is the only way to save her from misery and disgrace. The only thing that you can do to repair your fault, to protect your child from the effects of your crime, is to take her away from her country, and live an honest, honorable life in a distant land."

"But why need we go so far? I cannot go beyond the reach of all tidings. If you are in danger——"

"You must, you shall!" cried Lucian, angrily. "It is the only way. You are to think of Susanne alone—not of me, nor of yourself. You are to live for your child—that is your whole duty. If you do not obey me entirely," he added, in a solemn tone, "I will disown you, I will be your brother no longer; never, never will I speak to, or look at you again."

George de Bussine ceased to protest, and his brother went on hurriedly:

"You will take the early express train to-morrow for Marseilles, and then set sail in the first ship; not a moment is to be lost anywhere. Give me a written order to sell out your property here, and then pack your trunks as fast as possible. Henriette's funeral will be at ten to-morrow, and I shall explain to the few who attend it that your daughter's health, broken by her mother's death, necessitated your taking her away before the last ceremonies. When my sister-in-law is laid to rest, I will think of myself, and may Heaven protect me."

Early the next morning Susanne stooped over the coffin, and, raising her mother's cold, white hand, placed in it a portrait of herself as a little child.

"There is the little girl you loved so well," she whispered, pressing her lips for the last time to her mother's face, and then her strength giving way before her sorrow, she fell fainting, and was carried to the carriage where her father awaited her.

As they were driven away, Lucian gazed sadly after them, and then busied himself with the arrangements for the funeral. When all was over he went to his rooms, resolving to await the time of Mr. Robins' return, and have an immediate interview with him. His servant told him that two persons had come inquiring for him in his absence.

"Very well," said the cashier, "admit no one; I shall be very busy for two hours."

It wanted exactly that time to the hour of Mr. Robins' return, and Lucian Lecomte, after again consulting the railway time-table with which he had provided himself, occupied the interval in arranging his letters and various papers, and burning such as were of no value. At the end of two hours he took up his hat and was about to leave the apartment, when the bell rang, and his servant, with many apologies for disobeying orders, announced two callers.

It was the captain of police and one of his officers. The latter, at a sign from his superior, took a seat in the ante-room, while the captain introduced himself to Mr. Lecomte.

Lucian Lecomte had foreseen every thing but this. He had thought that when the other employés of the bank found that he was not at his place in time to make the expected payment, they would think him indisposed or even negligent, and would quietly await the arrival of their principal.

But, unfortunately, he had forgotten Cabart, his rival, the unsuccessful aspirant to the position of cashier. At nine o'clock in the morning this individual began to wonder at Lecomte's non-appearance. "It is shameful in him to be so late to-day of all days. He is taking advantage of Mr.

Robins' absence to have a holiday. Oh, these young men! There is no relying upon them."

At eleven o'clock the payment of eighty-thousand francs was demanded, but refused by Cabart, who explained in a loud voice that the cashier was absent, and that Mr. Robins being away, no one could open the safe.

Every tongue in the office began wagging, and Cabart went from one desk to another in delight.

"What can it mean?" said the employés, wonderingly; "why did he not at least leave out the money?"

"I proposed it to him," said Cabart, "but Mr. Lecomte saw fit to decline without thanking me. He has been here only two years, and yet he was placed over me who have served faithfully for nearly twenty years. That is always the way."

"Perhaps he has been taken ill," said some one, and a boy was immediately sent to his rooms to inquire, but was told by the janitor that Mr. Lecomte had not been home all night. The next time he went he learned that the cashier had come home at an early hour, and gone away again, no one knew where.

The wonder of the employés increased on receiving these tidings, and Cabart contributed no small share to their amazement and suspicions.

"Not home all night!" he cried, raising his eyebrows, "and a wild young fellow like that is pre-

ferred to a solid man with grown up children and of proved reliability. Of course it is only a piece of negligence," he said, suddenly, as the office door opened, and then seeing that it was not the truant who entered, he went on acrimoniously, "Only yesterday, Dangler & Company's cashier ran off to Belgium."

"Perhaps we ought to notify the police," said a young clerk, briskly.

"No, no, there is no necessity for that, I am confident," said Cabart, shaking his head; "of course, it is our duty to protect our principal, but he will be here in a few hours."

"In a few hours a man can be in Belgium, and then what?" said the same young clerk.

"Not so fast, young man, you are over zealous for Mr. Robins. It is only I who will be blamed if there is any loss to the house."

"But there can be no loss," said another; "Mr. Lecomte is an honest man."

"Of course he is; that is just what I say, in spite of this young fellow's remarks. Something has happened to our cashier, some accident in the street; I will send the boy to his rooms again."

Cabart then went into his private office, signing to three of his special friends to follow him.

"Do not breathe this to the others," he said, as his listeners pressed round him; "but I cannot

help my suspicions. A man must believe his own eyes."

"What—what is it?" cried the three, eagerly.

"This is between ourselves?"

"Of course, of course; we will not mention it."

"On the night before last, at half-past ten o'clock, I was passing the bank, and I distinctly saw him gliding up the steps and unlocking the door." Cabart spoke solemnly, and his hearers looked at him in blank amazement.

"Are you sure?" asked one at last.

"Absolutely. My wife and daughter were with me, and they saw him as plainly as I see you now. They could swear to it, if it were necessary."

"It is very strange, to say the least," returned the others; "but Mr. Cabart, did you say anything about it to him the next morning?"

"Yes, indeed; I spoke of it in a casual way directly he came, and would you believe it, he denied emphatically having been here after business hours!"

"What!"

"He did; and when I said that I had seen him he declared that I must have mistaken some other person for him."

"It is hardly possible that all three of you made such a mistake."

"Hardly. My wife and daughter know Mr.

Lecomte very well; they have seen him every time they have come to the bank."

"Why should he have denied having come here after hours?"

"That is a mystery," said Cabart; and just then the boy returned from Lucian's rooms with the news that he had not yet returned.

Cabart's confidants now spread broadcast the tale he had told them, and the majority of the hearers were of the opinion that the police ought to be notified. After a long discussion Cabart resigned himself, though with affected reluctance, to this decree and the result was that the captain of police was ushered into Lucian's presence.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE cashier, pale and agitated in spite of his efforts at self-control, waited in silence for his visitor to speak.

"Am I right in supposing that you are Mr. Lucian Lecomte, cashier in the bank of Messrs. Robins & Co., in the boulevard Haussmann?" said the new-comer, politely.

"Yes," returned Lucian, signing to a chair, and then seating himself.

"I hope, Mr Lecomte," began the police captain

slowly," that you do not misunderstand my object in calling upon you this afternoon. I have come to make a few inquiries, in the interest not only of your employers but of yourself as well."

Lucian bowed without speaking, and the captain went on :

"Your colleagues at the bank are very much concerned at your non-appearance, especially on account of a large payment that you were to have made this morning. Will you be good enough to tell me the cause of your absence?"

"I prefer to explain it to Mr. Robins, who is to be at home in a few minutes. I was just going to meet him when you came in," said Lucian.

"Mr. Robins is not coming to-day," said the other; "a despatch has just been received from him saying that important business will detain him in England for twenty-four or perhaps even forty-eight hours longer."

Lucian's hopes died within him at this news, and his face grew paler than before as he glanced at the dispatch which the police captain handed him.

"You will now understand, Mr. Lecomte, that it will be impossible to postpone your explanation until Mr. Robins' return. He has, of course, been telegraphed to come back immediately; but as he has in all probability left London, he will not receive the message for some time, and in any case he could not reach home before to-morrow. I beg

you therefore to confide to me your reasons for not being at your desk when you knew that there was an important payment to be made."

Lucian answered without a moment's hesitation:

"It was on account of that payment that I absented myself. I would rather be thought forgetful or negligent of my duty, than that the house should be mistrusted for an instant. I would not have been able to meet the payment this morning."

"Do you mean that there is not enough money in the safe?"

"Precisely."

"But when Mr. Robins left home did he not entrust to you the necessary funds?"

Lucian hesitated a instant and then, not knowing what else to say, answered:

"I shall explain every thing to Mr. Robins."

The police captain shook his head and said, very seriously:

"Your refusing to answer my question, makes it appear that he did not provide for the payment."

"I did not say so," returned the cashier.

"And, excuse me, I could not believe you if you had" said the other, "for a letter received from Mr. Robins yesterday morning, gives full directions for the matter in question, and shows, moreover, that there ought to be at this moment more

than a hundred thousand francs in the safe
What has become of the money?"

"I have not got it," said Lucian, in a low tone.

He had no defense to make, for he dared not say he had been robbed, lest investigation should prove his brother to be the thief. He had made up his mind what to say to Mr. Robins, who had every confidence in him, but this unexpected catechising from a stranger disconcerted him so much that he had every appearance of being overwhelmed with the consciousness of guilt.

The captain of police stood up and asked in a stern voice:

"Do you think the safe has been robbed?"

"No, I suspect no one."

"Did you take out the money yourself?"

"No sir, I did not," cried Lucian, emphatically: And the other man, surprised at his unwonted energy, said more gently:

"Does any one besides yourself and your employer know the combination of the lock?"

"No one."

"Can any one have found it out?"

"I do not think that is probable."

"And your keys. Do you always keep them about you?"

"Yes, they never leave my pocket?"

"And you have not even the remotest suspicion of any one?"

"No."

"Do you solemnly affirm your own innocence?"

"I do."

The questioner looked round the room thoughtfully and then began again:

"You told me that when I entered this room, you were just about to go and meet Mr. Robins. Are you quite sure that you were not intending to leave the city?"

"I am quite sure of that."

"Yet here is a railway time-table, and it is opened at the page giving the hours of the northern road—the trains to Belgium."

"Mr. Robins is coming from Calais, and I was consulting the time-table in reference to his arrival. If I had desired to run away, I should have done so before now."

"Perhaps you were too busy? I see you have been burning papers." Lucian made no reply for he knew that appearances were against him, and the captain of police, taking up his hat, added:

"I am sorry, Mr. Lecomte, but I must ask you to remain here until my return," and going into the next room he gave some directions to the officer who was seated there.

Two hours later the captain came back again, and this time he was the bearer of a warrant of arrest.

CHAPTER IX.

CERTAIN crimes, like certain maladies, are apt to become epidemic in large cities. At one time murder is the fashion, and the crime will be done in an interesting variety of ways: some persons using a knife, others a pistol, others again, an ordinary handkerchief, or even their hands alone; while some eccentric genius will conceive the brilliant and striking plan of cutting his victim into pieces and despatching him on railway journeys in as many trunks, neatly strapped and labelled. At another time there is a sort of craze among bank cashiers for appropriating funds, and leaving the country at short notice.

The law is apt to be rather lenient with the first offenders, but when imitators of the bad example follow one another in rapid succession, and there seems to be a prospect of the epidemic becoming chronic in the community, justice becomes alarmed, refuses to consider the extenuating circumstances, and employs the full strength of the law to wipe out the contagion.

Unfortunately for Lucian Lecomte, at the time of his arrest there was a perfect fever of dishonesty among cashiers. A few of the culprits had been brought to punishment, but many more had escaped to Belgium, where they were living

in such luxury that rents had gone up, and famine was feared.

The air was full of the lamentations of the robbed; the newspapers full of the inefficiency of the police and of the judges. The news of the trouble in the boulevard Haussmann was received with a howl of indignation from an outraged public.

"There has been too much of this kind of thing," said every one "it must be stamped out before it spreads further."

The circumstance that was the most unfavorable to the accused was the night-visit to the bank, for not only the Cabort family, but also the janitor of the building, testified to having seen the cashier going in. He could not say that he had been anxious to finish some writing, or to get something out of his desk, as he had, before knowing of his brother's theft, declared to Cabart that he had not been in his office after business hours.

Lucian Lecomte's private life was investigated, and various clubs and gambling-houses ransacked, but though his brother had been a constant player the name of Lecomte (thanks to George de Bus-sine's vanity), did not appear on the list of patrons. In the Exchange, however, the searchers were more successful, for George had often speculated and had thought it necessary to sign his true name to schedules and receipts. Moreover, Lucian

Lecomte's name was found coupled, with that of Petit-homme on the books of the Exchange brokers for Lucian had often negotiated notes for his friend. Cornelius and Cæsarina, being called to the witness-stand, were forced to declare that Mr. Lecomte had tried on a certain day to borrow from them the sum of a hundred and ten thousand francs.

This testimony made it apparent that Lucian had used the missing money, and that he only was the thief.

Three months later he appeared before the Court of Assizes. His attitude was calm and dignified, but his answers very reserved. He declared his innocence in confident and striking terms, but the good impression produced by his manner evaporated when the incriminating facts against him were brought out.

Mr. Robins declared that he would never believe his cashier guilty of theft, and that he made no charge against him; he bitterly reproached Cabart for his precipitation in the matter of summoning the police, and expressed his firm conviction that there was some mystery about the money which sooner or later would be solved.

This deposition was coldly received, as it was attributed to mere sentiment of generosity on the part of the banker. Lucian Lecomte's lawyer was only half-hearted in the matter, being affected,

perhaps, by the cautious reserve and evident lack of straightforwardness of his client.

The jury retired, and after a short deliberation, returned a verdict of GUILTY, without any mention of extenuating circumstances, Lucian Lecomte was condemned to six years' imprisonment. He had believed up to that moment that justice would be done him; conscious of his innocence, he had not believed it possible that he would be convicted. His brain reeled when he heard his sentence, and as he was being taken out of the courtroom, he repeated mechanically in a broken voice:

"I am innocent, I am innocent!"

With drooping head, his body stiff and aching, his limbs weak and nerveless, Lucian Lecomte, preceded and followed by a guard, went slowly, down the granite staircase that led from the hall of the Court of Assizes to the prison cells.

Six years' imprisonment! What an outlook for a man who, a few weeks before, was enjoying absolute liberty, in full possession of health and strength, with no one to question or oppose his movements. For six long years he must live between stone walls and behind iron bars, with no free air, no horizon, and no blue sky above him. If he felt like walking about, a stern voice would exclaim, "It is against the rules to walk now;" and if he sat down to rest a moment, he

would be told, "It is time to walk; you must pace round in this courtyard like a caged beast;" if he spoke, he would be ordered to keep silence.

And this fate he could have escaped; this undeserved punishment need not have fallen upon him; he could have walked out of the courthouse a free man if he had but pointed out the culprit. But the culprit was his brother; the brother he had loved so long, and promised to protect and watch over—for whom he had sworn to sacrifice himself! Could he forget his promise to two dying women, the mother and the wife!

With slow, uncertain steps he went down the stairway to a dimly lighted passage, and now the guards walked beside him, each with a hand on his shoulder; he was now not merely suspected and accused, he was condemned.

Fearing that he meditated suicide, they put him into a cell with another prisoner, a burglar, who had just received his sentence of ten years at hard labor. This man tried to draw the new-comer into conversation.

"I hear that you are going to the *Centrale*; that is hard, very hard. I have been to *Mélun*, but now I am to be sent to *La Nouvelle*. I am glad of that; I like to travel at the expense of the State—it is amusing and instructive."

"Ah, leave me in peace!" groaned Lucian.

"You want to meditate?" persisted the other.

“Oh, very well, I shall not disturb you—only you make a great mistake not to talk while you can. At *La Centrale*, you will not have a chance to wave the red rag, I can tell you.”

Was this the kind of companionship he was doomed to endure for six whole years? The prison itself would be terrible enough, the prison garb and prison fare would be sufficiently repulsive; but oh! the comrades he would have beside him day and night!

CHAPTER X.

No road could be more gloomy and forbidding than that which leads to the prison of *La Grande Roquette*. On each side of the street is a row of dark old houses containing miserable, squalid-looking shops, while on every groundfloor is the show-room of a marble-cutter, with its funeral urns and open tombs. “You will soon die,” these seemed to say. “Take this opportunity of buying yourself a gravestone.” On the left side of the Square is the Reformatory for juvenile delinquents; in the centre, the Place of Execution, whose stones are stained with blood and worn by the carnage of the guillotine. A little farther off is the prison itself; none are admitted here except those condemned to

death, or to an imprisonment of at least one year; and these last must be old offenders, for *La Grande Roquette* is an aristocrat and admits only *great* criminals within her walls.

The general aspect of the locality is, then, very gloomy. On both sides of the road are empty tombs; at the end of it, the Cemetery of Père-la-Chaise, with its tombs all full; on one side of the square, the reformatory, a living tomb for childhood; on the other side, the prison, a tomb for those who have lived to no good purpose.

Along this dismal road the heavy van carried Lucian Lecomte to his new home. As soon as this well-known vehicle made its appearance, the soldiers on guard before the prison took up their muskets, and the turnkey, warned by the noise, hastened to open the gates.

As soon as the van had passed into the courtyard, and two sets of gates had been barred and bolted behind it, it was opened by the officials, and the prisoners came out, one by one.

They were dazed and bewildered by their rapid ride through Paris, their limbs ached from their cramped position in the van, and their eyes glanced furtively about them.

Lucian Lecomte stood motionless with his gaze fixed on the flag-stones, while he waited his turn to have his name registered on the calendar, and a list made of the various articles found on his

person (which would be returned to him on the expiration of his sentence), and then, a number being allotted him, for the purpose of identification, he was taken into a room. It was a low, gloomy apartment, where criminals condemned to death made their last toilet. Here Lucian was obliged to undress, and after being closely inspected, lest he should have some forbidden article concealed upon him, he was given a full suit of prison clothes. His face, which had been as pale as death, now flushed hotly with shame and indignation, but obedience was his sole duty; and the official who was in charge of him, exclaimed, not unkindly, but in a cheerful tone:

“You have nothing to complain of, for you will be clothed at the expense of the State, while you are serving your time, and then your own clothes will be given back to you as good as ever!”

After being shaved and having his head closely cropped, Lucian was taken into the prison-yard, where the other convicts were taking their noon-day exercise. There were about two hundred of them, walking along in single file or by twos; they went slowly, never looking behind them nor stopping to converse, always turning at the same spot. A few others were seated on a narrow bench along the wall, eating their dinner out of yellow bowls. The jailor and two or three turn-keys sufficed to keep this crowd of men in

perfect order, and nothing was heard but the murmur of low voices and the rattling of wooden shoes upon the pavement.

As Lucian appeared in the yard, the buzz of voices ceased entirely, and every eye was fixed upon him. He stood rooted to the spot, in his strange, coarse clothes and awkward wooden shoes, until a turnkey pushed his arm and said gruffly:

“Go on, walk; you cannot stand around.”

Lucian joined the ranks of his comrades, therefore, and began walking slowly, as they were doing.

CHAPTER XI.

THE convicts judged the new-comer at a single glance. They saw by his attitude, by his evident confusion and bewilderment, by the way he walked and held his hands, that he was not an old offender; while the whiteness of his skin convinced them that he had belonged to the upper ranks of society. Before long his name was whispered from mouth to mouth; for it was well known at *La Grande Roquette* that a bank cashier, named Lucian Lecomte, had received a six years' sentence in the Court of Assizes. It is astonishing how fast news travels and circulates among the jail-birds of Paris. Thinking

that he might possibly have some small money about him, they endeavored to conciliate him by whispering a word in his ear; but Lucian made no reply, for he heard nothing, saw nothing, and only walked on mechanically, hardly knowing where he was. At the sound of a large bell, the procession stopped suddenly, and the prisoners dispersed to the various work-rooms which were situated on the ground floor. Lucian would have followed some of them; but an official stopped him and asked what he could do.

"What can I do?" he repeated, wonderingly.

"Yes, what is your trade?"

"I have no trade," he said.

"Then go to the bindery, and they will tell you there what to do."

Accordingly, the ex-cashier was given his first lesson in book-binding, but at seven o'clock the great bell announced that it was bedtime. There was no gas in the prison, and as the men could see to work no longer, they were sent to bed at dark, and for a part of the year their night was twelve hours long.

Lucian Lecomte was thankful to find himself locked in a narrow cell, where there was no one to look at him curiously and try to make him talk, where he could be quite alone, with only his own thoughts for company.

The next day the Superintendent sent for him,

and he was led across the front courtyard where the van had stopped, and up a staircase to the private office of the highest dignitary of the place. This man was a strict disciplinarian, but had the reputation of being merciful and humane. He read the new-comer at a single glance, and in a tone of kindliness and interest, said to him :

“Lecomte, I sent for you to tell you that you have been particularly recommended to me by your former employer. Mr. Robins came to me directly you arrived here.”

“He is the only person that believes in my innocence,” said Lucian, bitterly.

“That is not my affair, of course,” returned the other ; “while you are here you are in my charge as a prisoner, but on account of Mr. Robins’ recommendation I will do all I can to ameliorate your condition. You need not work in the bindery with the others, but shall have charge of the library, where your sole duty will be to take in and give out the books according to the directions you will receive. That work will be more in accordance with your taste and education.”

“I thank you, sir, with all my heart,” said Lucian, gratefully. And then the other said :

“Would you not like to have the privilege of the parlor ?”

“No,” said Lecomte, smiling sadly ; “there is no one to visit me,”

"There you are wrong, you have already been called for."

"By whom? Mr. Robins?"

"No, he feared that you would not care to receive him; but two persons, a Mr. and Mrs. Petit-homme, have petitioned most earnestly to be allowed to see you. If you will write an application I will endorse it, and the request will certainly be granted."

"Thank you, thank you, sir," said Lucian, thinking that perhaps the Petit-hommes had received a letter from Susanne for him. As he bowed and turned to leave the room the superintendent rose and showed him to the door, almost forgetting that the poor man was not an honored guest, so forcibly was he impressed by Lucian's dignity of bearing, and the intellectual, though sorrowful, expression of his face. The man who led him to the library said in a tone of congratulation:

"You are very lucky, I can tell you."

"Comparatively lucky," thought the other.

CHAPTER XII.

ONE day Lecomte was summoned to the parlor. It was a long, low room with small windows looking into the front court, and was divided by iron gratings into three compartments. Into the first of these the visitor was ushered, while the prisoner whom he wished to see was admitted at the other end of the room. Conversation was carried on, therefore, with at least a yard's space between the two persons, as the second compartment separated them; this was, however, occupied by guards; so that any exchange of confidences was hardly possible.

As a special privilege, however, Lucian Lecomte was admitted to the middle compartment, where close contact with visitors could be enjoyed, and handshakes and kisses exchanged. When he approached his two friends, they did not recognize him in his prison uniform, with his haggard face shaved and his eyes encircled by deep black lines. He called them by name, and at the sound of his voice they started up from their seat and went towards him slowly with downcast eyes and dejected bearing.

Cornelius Petit-homme, indeed, drooped his little head so low that it nearly disappeared between his massive square shoulders, and he looked

like some great bird asleep, with his head beneath its wing. Lucian Lecomte could not help pitying his two friends, and he said in a calm voice, and smiling sadly :

“Come nearer, my good friends, for you see I cannot go to you, and I want to shake hands with you, and thank you for not forgetting me entirely.”

Cæsarina, bolder than her husband, put her hand between the gratings and pressed Lucian's nervously, saying, as she did so :

“Then you do not bear malice ?”

“Why should I ?” he replied ; “I have nothing to reproach you for.”

“We reproach ourselves, Mr. Lucian ; we have done nothing else since you were sentenced. We know that all this could not have happened if we had not been——”

“Misers !” exclaimed Cornelius, solemnly, as his wife hesitated. It was probably the first time since his marriage that he had ventured to express an idea without her aid, and nothing but the most poignant remorse could have so far emboldened him.

“Mr. Petit-homme is right,” said Cæsarina ; “we are misers, but our money will never give us pleasure again. Since this dreadful affair was decided we have not dared to open our chest, for the sight of the bonds and banknotes would only make us more miserable.”

"Do not speak of that any more," said Lucian. "I wish to forget the past, though I thank you for your repentance."

"Ah! how much more noble he is than we!" said the woman, with tears filling her eyes as she looked at her kind friend, the son of her benefactor, standing behind the bars in his prison uniform.

"You will not be there long," she said; "the truth will be discovered, and you will have justice."

"Then you, too, like Mr. Robins, do not believe me guilty!" he cried, joyfully.

"No, we know you are innocent; and we know who is the guilty one."

"Who do you mean?" said Lucian, in alarm.

And Cæsarina, seeing his agitation, turned to her husband, saying:

"We were right, Cornelius. It was his brother."

"Hush!" said Lucian, in an angry tone; "do not dare to say such a thing again. If you repeat it I shall never, never forgive you. Besides, it is false, do you hear me—it is utterly false."

"Very well, it is false, since you will have it so, Mr. Lucian; and we will not repeat it to any one. It is, indeed, too late to speak now. We know just how it happened, though it did not occur to us at the time of the trial. Your brother lost the money at play on the night that Mr. Petit-homme

found him in the club house when his wife was dying. You need not deny it nor look as if you would like to strike us dumb, for we will keep your secret."

"There is no secret to keep," persisted Lecomte.

"Of course not," Cæsarina said; "your brother had nothing at all to do with the matter, and you had no special object in sending him away from France. He has merely gone travelling in Africa for his own pleasure."

"How do you know he is in Africa?" demanded Lucian; and Madame Petit-homme replied:

"We received not long ago a letter from Africa; and on opening it found inside another one, directed to you."

"Ah, give it me—it is from Susanne!" cried Lucian, putting his hand between the bars of the grating and looking round cautiously at the guard. The man was not taking any notice of him, however, for he was known to be specially privileged by the Superintendent; and when he had thrust the precious missive into his bosom, Cæsarina said, with an air of hesitation and embarrassment:

"Mr. Lucian, we have brought you a few bank-notes, for you are surely without money. You are astonished, are you not? We are so ourselves, but take the money, quick, while our good impulse lasts."

Lucian could not restrain a smile as he thanked his friends, and assured them that he had no use at all for money; and Cæsarina, having eased her conscience with the good intention, put the notes back into her pocket, and the pair departed promising to come again.

Lucian Lecomte returned to the library, and, after making sure that no one was watching him, opened the letter. It was from Susanne, and ran as follows:

“My dear Uncle. As you do not answer my letters I fear that you have not received them, and so I will tell you everything over again. Perhaps, indeed, you will not mind hearing it twice from your little Susanne. Oh, how unhappy I was the day we left Paris in such a hurry; how I wept for dear mamma—you would have been very sorry if you had seen me. It grieved me beyond everything to think that I could not pray beside her grave, and strew it with fresh flowers; for even though she could not answer when I called, she would smile on me from Heaven,—for she could not help pitying her child. And you, too, my dear Uncle, I was so sorry to leave you all alone. I love you so much that I shall not call you “Uncle” any more, but “father”—you are my father, Lucian, and papa is father George. He will not be jealous, he loves you too well for

that. I often hear him murmur, 'My brother, oh, my brother!' with his eyes all wet with tears. You will excuse this wandering letter, for you know I am not yet sixteen, though quite advanced for my age, people say. Mamma used to tell me that she and I would be together for a long time yet, for only my marriage would separate us. Alas! death, instead of marriage, has parted us. You knew, dear Uncle, how wretched I would be at home without my mother, and so you ordered me to go away; you thought that travelling would take my thoughts away from my sorrow; and you were right, you are always right. I obeyed you because my mother told me to, and because I loved you so; but what a pang it cost me! I enjoy travelling in new lands, I like to see the strange costumes and people; but still I am often sad, and I long to see you, whom my mother loved so well. Papa, too, is sorrowful, especially when the mail from France arrives. One day when he was reading a newspaper he cried out suddenly, 'I must go back—I must join him!' and I knew that he spoke of you. That was in the beginning of December, but since January he has been more calm, for he has seen no more French newspapers, they are very rare in these solitudes. What solitudes? I am sure you ask, and now I will tell you all about our journey. Our first stopping place was Marseilles, of course, where we embarked without

any delay, and in thirty-five hours arrived at Algiers. Oh, if you only knew how papa has changed for the better! I mean in regard to that habit which grieved dear mamma so much, and which you made him promise to give up. When we were on board the steamer some of the other passengers proposed to play cards, but papa exclaimed, 'I never play; I shall never play again!' and he took me up on deck, as if he would not even look at other persons playing. We stayed at Algiers only three days and, indeed, papa would have preferred to go on directly, but he thought that I needed rest. He seems to shun large towns and all French people, and longs only to be alone with me. He often presses me to his heart and whispers, 'Oh, my child, love me, love me!' He never leaves me and seems to think of me alone. From Algiers we went by sea to Philipville, where we took the train, and in a few hours reached Constantine. Such a picturesque town! It is like a big nest perched up on a rock. And such strange costumes and people, Arabs, Jews, Moors; and all the women cover their faces—I wonder why? The next day we went in a stage-coach to Batna, and then to Biskra, and this part of the journey was most fatiguing. All around us were mountains, ravines and dreadful precipices. But we are here at last, and are well rewarded for our trouble; the sky is the most

wonderfully clear blue; before us lies the Desert of Sahara like a sea of purple sand, and on one side rise the Atlas Mountains. It is all so strangely beautiful, that when I first saw it I fell upon my knees and wept.

“And now my father has given me a great surprise—the artist has awakened in him. We were hardly settled down here, near a lovely grove of palm trees, when he produced pencils, brushes, and colors, which he had bought in Marseilles, and began to paint. ‘I hope,’ he said, ‘to make enough money with my brush to pay all that I owe and give you a little dowry, my daughter.’ And he will succeed, I know, for he has great talent. A young Irish gentleman, Mr. Lionel Murdon, who has been here for some time, said yesterday, after looking fixedly at a hardly finished picture of papa’s, ‘What wonderful coloring, how true to nature it is!’ Imagine how proud and happy I felt. We shall stay here at Biskra a long time, so you can send your letters here, and I long to hear from you. Are you lonely without your little girl? How I wish I could put my arms about your neck and kiss you dearest uncle, if you were but with us I should be so happy! Pray, pray write soon to your loving and devoted
SUSANNE.”

As he read this letter tears obscured the sight of Lucian more than once, but they were tears of

joy, and brought relief to his bursting heart. He saw that his brother had implicitly obeyed him, and had hidden himself in a solitude, where news from France would hardly penetrate; and even if a newspaper containing an account of the trial and conviction should by chance reach him, it would then be too late for protest or self-denunciation. The letter told Lucian, too, that his had not been a fruitless sacrifice, since his brother's best feelings had been awakened by it—he had renounced his vice and settled down to honest work. Ah, if that dearly loved brother should prove to be entirely cured of his fatal vice; if he would but devote his life to his daughter and his art, Lucian felt that he could cheerfully bear his captivity and disgrace! It was a real joy to suffer for the sake of that innocent, trusting child; what would she have been to-day; what future would be hers if he had answered to the judge's questions: "My brother is the guilty one!"

George would have been arrested in the house where his wife lay dead; and Susanne, would have seen her father dragged away to prison.

What a sight for one so young! Lucian congratulated himself on having kept silence, and a holy pride, the pride of the martyr, filled his soul.

His sufferings, both physical and mental, seemed much easier to bear, and he even looked

forward to the possibility of a brighter future, and reflected that, thanks to his clear record and the influence of his good friend, Mr. Robins, a great part of his sentence had been remitted. By the time he was free again, George and Susanne would have returned to France, his brother would be a great artist, and Susanne a beautiful young lady; they would all live together in some retired place and would be happy and respected.

These thoughts, hopes, and dreams made his existence less unbearable during the two months of his stay in *La Grande Roquette*.

Early in April he learned that he was to be one of a convoy of prisoners who were to go to another prison to work out their sentence, and two days later he went in the convict van to the Penitentiary of Melun.

PART SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

TUNIS, surnamed the White by the ancients, the Pearl of the Occident by the poets, and the "Burnous of the Prophet," by the Arabs, was very violently agitated on the 18th of September, 187—. From the Kasba, or Mussulman quarter, to the Place Marine, where the Europeans lived, there was nothing but noise and tumult; in the streets of the *souks*, or wooden-roofed bazaars, the Moors, clad in long robes of violet silk, many colored turbans on their heads, and sandals on their feet, stood about in groups talking and gesticulating, instead of making their usual purchases or idly drinking coffee; and Arabs, enveloped in their white burnous, numerous and noisy, swarmed the streets and squares.

Zankat-el-Hara, the Jewish quarter, was as much excited as the rest; the sale of jewels, ornaments and weapons was forgotten, and the shopkeepers met together only to converse vociferously, while the Jewish women, whose customs allowed them to appear in the streets with uncovered faces,

mingled with the men and joined in the general tumult. They were very beautiful in most cases, though somewhat too stout for the Biblical costume, which consisted of a short, full skirt of red, blue or yellow silk, tight breeches, and large Phrygian bonnet. The Europeans were not entirely indifferent to the causes of all the uproar. Sicilians, Sardinians, Anglo-Maltese and French gathered in front of their various consulates, or in their restaurants and hotels, exchanging ideas on the subject and asking questions eagerly.

Negroes chattered and gesticulated wildly; negresses, waving their arms, rattled their brass bracelets, while the wives of the *fellahs* (peasants), dressed in cotton tunics, their faces covered with white or black veils, sat beside their pyramids of wheat and millet and forgot to drive off the great blue flies that buzzed about them. A troupe of *Aissonas*, or serpent-charmers, and swallows of lizards and scorpions, whose audience had left them suddenly, sat crouched in a corner, staring silently at the passers-by. In some of the back-streets the dancing-girls, with their foreheads, cheeks and arms covered with symbolic figures, peered through wooden lattices, or drew aside the curtains to try and discover what was going on in the streets.

The women of the higher classes, wives or *odalisques* of Turks, Moors, and Arabs, frightened

by the noise which had penetrated even to their harems, hurried along attended by old black eunuchs or slaves, and mingled with the throng in the streets. Like the men, they formed themselves into groups, and their gestures were often so violent as they talked that the *féradje* (a sort of cloak), would be flung back, showing a vest sewn with pearls, and full satin trousers embroidered in gold. Some of them even so far forgot the laws of their religion as to let fall the *yashmak*, or veil, from their faces, and if the men had been less preoccupied they could have gazed freely at the perfect profiles, the red lips, white teeth, and long, gazelle-like eyes.

The later it grew, the more compact became the crowd, until it seemed as if every one of the hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants of Tunis had come into the street at once. The horses with gilded saddles, and the little white donkeys, could not pass, and the great camels lay quietly down with their forelegs tucked under them, stretching their necks toward the crowd as if wondering why their way was blocked, and asking the meaning of all the fuss. And what was the cause of it? Had the Tunisians risen against their sovereign?

If it were so, the *Lamba* (guards), and the soldiers would certainly have been occupied in quelling the riot but they, on the contrary, were talking with the people; the officers in their black

overcoats and red *fez*, ornamented with a golden star, passing from one group to another and evidently sharing the general sentiment; while the men in the barracks were calmly knitting their stockings and turning an indifferent ear to the ever-increasing uproar.

The crowd was surging-steadily toward one point, guided by a score of mingled Arabs, Turks, Moors, and even Jews, for all religious distinctions were forgotten in that moment, and after rushing along one of the principal streets, (the Babes-Sadonna), reached a large square, where it stopped in front of an immense lime-washed mansion, having but few windows, a flat roof which was used as a garden, and a single doorway, narrow, but very massive.

It was the palace of Mourad, the Bey's khage-radar (Prime-Minister). Why did the mob surround this person's house? Was it to applaud or to insult him? The latter seemed the more likely, for several Arabs shook their fists at the palace, and cries of "Giaour! Giaour!" were heard. But this was a Mussulman term of reproach for a Christian, and Mourad, who had long been the favorite of the Bey, was surely a disciple of Mahomet. He was accused, however, of behaving like a Frank, dog, a *Giaour*. What were his crimes? How had he offended?

First of all, he had taken advantage of the power

acquired through the confidence of his sovereign, to burden the people with unjust taxes by which his own coffers were enriched ; this, however, was the least heinous of his misdeeds, for Tunisians, Egyptians, Turks, and indeed Orientals of all nationalities, have always been accustomed to see their masters grow rich at their expense. Mourad had done only as his predecessors had always done. There was a more serious complaint against the Prime-minister. His father, Mourad-pacha, had sent him in his youth to France to study, and in that land he had not only forgotten Mahometan laws and customs, but had lost his religious faith, through living among Christians. He was seldom, if ever, seen in a mosque, and held these sacred places in so little veneration that he had ordered the arrest of an assassin who had taken refuge in the great mosque of Djama-Sidi-Man'rez.

Then, again, during the *ramazan*. (the Mahometan Lent), instead of passing the time in prayer and fasting, he went about the city with gay companions, visited the Consuls, and even sat in European restaurants chatting with the Christians. His private life was likewise scandalous ; for, not content with having four lawful wives, and a large number of other women called "odalisques," and with owning a magnificent harem which was renowned all over Tunis, and even in Constantino-

ple—not content with all this (which was strictly in accordance with the teachings of the Koran), he wished also to appropriate the property of his neighbors, and taking the opportunity while certain husbands were absent at their devotions he assumed various disguises, and made his way into the women's apartments, where not even the most intimate of male friends was admitted. Mourad had committed these different crimes repeatedly, doing violence to every custom, idea, and prejudice of the Orient; how was it then that he had never been reproached with them till now?

The reason for his having thus far escaped the righteous indignation of his countrymen, was that he had been a favorite of his sovereign, and no one had dared to complain of him. This morning, however, in the royal palace of Bardo, the Bey had ordered the Prime Minister from the presence and had declared him deposed from office, and the Tunisians, having no longer reason to fear or respect Mourad, had immediately remembered his sins, and regretted having borne their wrongs so patiently. The mob gathered more closely around the Minister's palace, recounting his misdeeds in angry tones, and shaking not only their fists but also long sticks, while some of the negroes, children and Jewish women picked up stones and old bones and even mud, and threw them against the white walls of the palace. Heaving, surging and

roaring like the sea, the crowd presented a brilliant scene; turbans of every hue, Phrygian bonnets, white burnuos, silken vests, and swords of Damascus steel glittered dazzlingly in the bright sunshine, reflecting golden rays.

But, suddenly, the Western sky put on a violet tint, and from the midst of a group of small white clouds the sun, just ready to set, looked out, making a golden circle. Then came a sonorous, prolonged cry from a neighboring minaret. It was the *Muezzin* calling the faithful to evening prayer, and from every one of the two hundred minarets of Tunis rose the same invocation. Instantaneously, a dead silence fell over the angry crowd; every man, woman and child turned in the direction of Mecca, and falling to the ground, with hands clasped fervently, began to pray.

Their devotions finished, the people rose, seeming to have forgotten all about Mourad, for some went to the mosque to resume their prayers, and others walked quietly to their homes to perform the ablutions enjoined by the prophet.

CHAPTER II.

WHILE the Tunisians were menacing him with words and gestures, Mourad was lying comfortably on a large divan in the Semalik (the men's portion of the house), smoking his pipe and sipping coffee from a tiny cup, which was ornamented with pearls. He was about thirty years of age, with a clear pale complexion, long-shaped eyes of a bluish black hue, and thoughtful, languid expression, a pure Greek nose, and small white teeth, which gleamed brightly under a full brown mustache.

Opposite him sat Sivasti, his secretary, confidant and friend. This man was the son of a Moor and a Georgian slave, and had never been separated from Mourad since their earliest childhood. The two youths had been educated at the same French college, and on their return to Tunis Sivasti had become almost as influential as his master. He was tall and vigorous, with square shoulders, broad chest, a jovial expression of face, and in manner was more Parisian than Oriental.

"What do you think of this disturbance?" asked the secretary, who in spite of the Mahometan law forbidding the faithful to use any spirituous liquors was drinking grog with evident relish.

"I think," replied Mourad, speaking French,

which he generally preferred to his mother-tongue, "that these brawlers will soon go to their houses and sleep as quietly as usual."

"But how about to-morrow? Do you not fear another uprising of the people?"

"Oh, no; they will forget all about me. You do not suppose that they would dare to break into my house, do you?"

"Then, in spite of your deposition, you intend to remain in Tunis?"

"Not I, indeed! I have no fear of the mob, but I mistrust the new minister, my successor. He will not be able to sleep in peace while I am in the country, fearing my restoration to power."

"And he is, no doubt, at this moment laying a plot to have you strangled."

"No, no, Sivasti; foreign influence has put a stop to that practice."

"Then they will order your arrest, and justice in Tunis is very expeditious—as you know who have so often administered it."

Mourad smiled as he answered:

"Some time ago, I foresaw this catastrophe, and took the precaution of putting myself under the protection of France."

"Then we have nothing to fear," cried Sivasti; but his master corrected him:

"There is one danger that you have not thought of, and that is the most difficult to

combat—poison. One drop in a cup of coffee, or a glass of violet-syrup would be sufficient, and could not be detected. Poisoning is not a political crime; the Europeans can not prevent it, and I have not the slightest doubt that my honorable successor will make the greatest effort to bribe one of my slaves. I cannot answer for the integrity of three hundred men and women, white and black.”

“You are right,” said Sivesti, sending a ring of smoke into the air; “a poison will be tried. Then you mean to leave Tunis?”

“Yes, to-night.”

“And where will you go—to Algeria? The frontier is not far off.”

“To Algeria by land? You are mad, Sivasti. Are you not aware that my countrymen accuse me unjustly of despising their customs and ancient practices? And yet, acting according to those very customs, I have deprived myself of increased wealth by not putting my money at interest in any way, and have kept it entirely in coin and precious stones in a few caskets. Now see how I am misjudged by my countrymen! Would you have me travel in the desert with such baggage as this, Sivasti? It would be utter madness. I should be relieved of my burden by the first troop of wandering Bedouins that caught sight of me,

No indeed, the only safe plan is to go to France by sea, direct."

"True," said Sivasti; "and it so happens that a steamer of the Valery line leaves to-morrow for Marseilles."

"I shall take passage in it. At about three o'clock in the morning I shall leave this house; make straight for the lake, hire a cutter, and in three or four hours I shall be on board the steamer."

"Who will go with you?"

"You, Sivasti, unless you prefer to stay here."

"I prefer to stay in Tunis! Why, I am delighted at your disgrace, because it will be the cause of my going to Paris, which I adore!"

"We shall live well, I assure you. I will dispose gradually of my diamonds and pearls, of which I know the real value. I do not hesitate to say that by selling my whole stock, I could realize as much as seven or eight million francs."

"How we shall feast!" said Sivasti, exultingly. And after a few moments reflection, he said: "What will you do with your three hundred slaves, black and white?"

"Oh, they will be easily disposed of after I am gone. My successor can take them as a job lot to set up an establishment."

"But your wives—and first of all, the four?"

"Divorce is well known in Tunis, and my deser-

tion will make them free to marry again—my successor is a bachelor I believe.”

As he spoke Mourad rose slowly, and began walking up and down the handsomely carpeted room, with his arm resting on his friend's.

“Truly now, Sivasti, you do not expect me to encumber myself with all that mass of women-kind! Good heavens! What should I do with those dark-skinned dolls, languid, lazy, stupid, enervated by Oriental life? They are without education or brains, they can do nothing except smoke, eat sweetmeats and pastry, and tint their eyelids with *kohl*, and their fingers with henna. There are much better to be found in Paris, my dear fellow; remember those we saw before we came away? Instead of having one great stationary harem, we can have several little movable ones.”

“Delightful!” cried the other; with sparkling eyes; “but there are not only the four wives to think of; you have also ten Circassians whom you have lately raised to the dignity of ‘odalisques.’ ”

“I am not at all concerned about them; the men of Tunis will have no objection to marrying Mourad's former wives. They will be all the fashion.”

“Then we go alone.”

“Not quite. There is Fatmah.”

“Oh, you cannot part with her?”

"I could, if it were convenient, just as easily as with the others; but I think that she may, on occasion, be useful to me in Paris."

"In what way?"

"I do not know exactly how, but she is beautiful in form and figure, and very intelligent. I care nothing for her now, while she is all devotion to me, and would serve me to the death. Besides all that, I paid a thousand *bourses* for her—that is, a hundred thousand francs, and an exorbitant price it was—only last year."

"And you do not care to leave a hundred thousand francs behind you, when you can carry it away! Be it so, she will serve to remind us of the pleasures of the harem. Poor harem! will you not even stay to bid it farewell?"

"If I did that, all my wives would hang about my neck at once, and I should not be able to move," said Mourad; "it will not do for me to speak of parting, but I will assemble them to witness a grand ballet—my last night in Tunis shall be one of festivity."

"But will you not first arrange your affairs and prepare for the voyage?"

"How European you are already! I am one of the faithful; I leave all my affairs to Providence who takes care of such details. I have nothing to do but take up my jewel caskets and go when

the time comes. Be ready, Sivasti, at three o'clock, in the court of the harem. Adieu."

They parted, but in a few minutes the secretary came back to report that, although the crowd had dispersed, there was a party of Jews and Arabs watching the palace from a neighboring terrace. Mourad reflected a little and then said.

"Never mind; we shall escape them, and Tunis will never forget our departure, I promise you."

The Prime Minister, Mourad-Bey, who was as fond of luxury and ostentation as are all Orientals, had established a harem of unusual magnificence. It was a sort of miniature copy of the grand Seraglio of Constantinople, consisting of square courts paved with marble, where fluted columns supported lofty galleries, from which opened numberless apartments. There were spacious gardens, shaded by orange and olive trees, and trembling mimosas, polished marble basins for the bath, and a banquet hall with walls richly carved in Arabesque, and furnished with large, soft divans of rich materials, and little tables made of mother-of-pearl.

The inhabitants of this gorgeous palace were sub-divided after the manner of those in the sultan's harem, and bore the same titles.

First, were the four *Cadinis*, or lawful wives, who were respectively known as the "great lady," the "second lady," the "middle lady," and the "little

lady," and next in order came the *ikbals*, or favorites, who were numbered in the same way as the wives.

The third class consisted of the *gnienz-dés*, whose name signifies, literally, "maidens of the eye," and these being very beautiful might at any moment be raised to the next higher rank, at the caprice of the lord of the harem. After these came the numberless slaves whose duty it was to wait upon those already named, to dress them, fan them, and accompany them when they went out, and for each task there was a certain slave. Some of these *kalfas* were formed into a ballet-corps and taught to dance for the amusement of Mourad.

The slaves who did the hard work of the establishment were both white and black, and generally old and ugly, and they were never allowed in the presence of the master of the house. A band of black eunuchs acted as watchmen, and their chief was known by the singular title of Guardian of the Gate of Happiness.

Mourad passed into the harem, after parting with Sivasti, and no sooner was it known that the master had come, than he was surrounded by his wives and favorites, who wept loudly, while the eunuchs tore their hair frantically.

The news of Mourad's disgrace had reached the harem and its inmates feared for their lord's lib-

erty and life. Mourad hastened to reassure them, saying cheerfully:

“It is of no consequence; I shall be re-instated to-morrow, and shall be more powerful than ever. As for to-night, I have come to spend it with you in the grand banquet-hall;” and with his head raised proudly, a calm smile on his lips, he sauntered from one room to another, stroking his brown mustache.

The women, with the characteristic mobility of Orientals, passed instantly from deep despair to joyous confidence. Fatmah alone, the Circassian slave, whom Mourad had determined to take away with him, remained sadly silent, and at the first opportunity she said to him, in an anxious whisper:

“You are deceiving us. What is the matter?”

He leaned toward her, and with an apparently careless air, answered in a low tone:

“You are to leave the harem with me to-night.

Get ready secretly and quickly, and then come back and sit by me in the banquet-hall.”

Fatmah rose, her face radiantly joyful, and walked slowly away with the graceful swinging gait of Oriental girls; and Mourad, after giving orders for the feast, went alone to a room into which none but he had access. Here were piled in magnificent disorder all sorts of costly stuffs, embroidered scarfs, and veils of the finest silken gauze. In this storehouse Mourad spent

some time, and then coming out, locked the door carefully, and rejoined his household. All rose as he entered the grand hall, and when he had stretched himself upon a divan, and taken his pipe from the hands of a beautiful slave, he made a sign and the dancers entered. Some of these were dressed in light colored satin skirts with richly embroidered vests; while others wore silken-gauze skirts fringed with gilt, scarlet satin scarfs, and had their shoulders bare. In their abundant black or brown hair, glittered tiny gold pieces and pins with jewelled heads.

They were accompanied by musicians, who played upon various instruments, among which were tambourines, and *kondoums*, the latter being like two tambourines united, and struck with little sticks. In the Oriental dance the feet are scarcely seen to move, but the body above the waist waves and turns gracefully to the music, the upraised arms wind and interlace, the head is thrown back, the red lips are parted, and the brilliant eyes half closed and languishing; and as the music quickens, the movements become more animated and exciting.

The dancing was succeeded by singing, and, in the intervals, Mourad strolled about the room talking gaily with his wives and favorites, apparently calm and unconcerned, and a little drowsy.

At about three o'clock in the morning cries of

terror suddenly resounded through the gorgeous palace, and a lurid light filled the apartments; there was a strong odor of burning and loud shrieks of "fire, fire!" were heard in the court where the slaves were gathered.

The dancers and other women echoed the words, and rushed about terror stricken; but Fatmah, calmer than the rest, turned to Mourad for an explanation.

"I lighted a slow fuse in the storeroom," he said, hurriedly, "so as to burn down this palace which would be confiscated to-morrow, and to make our flight more easy. Come."

He went to his private room, took three small chests from a secret cupboard, and giving one to Fatmah, and another to Sivasti, who had joined them, led the way out of the palace.

The three fugitives passed unnoticed through the crowd in the court-yard, as they were enveloped in large *bourouns* and had their heads covered by *bourkas*, or hoods, and being thus rendered unrecognizable they made their way unrecognized into the streets of the city.

CHAPTER III.

THEY walked in single file and without speaking through narrow winding alleys until they approached the lake where the roads were wider.

Mourad and Sivasti were in a merry humor, and as soon as they were able to walk side by side, the secretary exclaimed :

“The people of Tunis complain that their city is not properly lighted. How unjust they are—see it is as bright as day!”

“And all at my expense,” said Mourad; “they ought to be satisfied.”

They spoke French, which Mourad had had taught to Fatmah, and she now joined in the conversation, saying :

“Do you not regret your beautiful palace?”

“Regrets are useless,” returned Mourad: “they only serve to shorten life, and if I had not burned my house, my successor would have been only too glad to appropriate it. He would not have disdained to take my chests, too. Is that one too heavy for you, Fatmah?”

“No, my lord; it seems very light, so happy am I at being with you.”

“It is the most valuable of the three, nevertheless,” said Mourad, taking no notice of her last words.

On reaching the lake they looked about for a boat in which to go up the canal to Goletta, the port of Tunis, where they could easily reach the French steamer. After some delay, Sivasti succeeded in rousing a boatman, and they embarked and were soon in the middle of the lake. It was a beautiful night, warm and cloudless, the sky bejewelled with stars, and not a breath of wind was stirring.

Far off, a light haze hung over the sea; and the boatman seeing it, remarked that the next day the lake would not be so calm as it was then.

"That is not a cheerful prospect for us," said Sivasti. But his master answered :

"To-morrow belongs to God," piously quoting a Mussulman proverb, although he did not cherish a vestige of the faith of his countrymen.

In an hour's time the fugitives reached a little islet in the middle of the lake, from which there was a magnificent view of Tunis, where the white walls of the houses and the domes of the mosques were glowing redly in the light of the conflagration. The flames rose so high that they even illuminated the lake and its shores, and on the sandy beach was seen a score of great red flamingoes, who stood sleeping soundly with their heads buried in their feathers.

The boat now entered the canal, along whose shores were seen rows of houses; and further on,

the customs-house, arsenal, the old palace of the Bey, and a small fortress.

"What shall we do if we are stopped?" said Sivasti; "you, yourself, gave orders that no one should go up the canal at night."

"I do not flatter myself that my commands are obeyed," returned Mourad; "but if by chance there should be one soldier awake at this hour, we would have to land and walk through the city. We should not be recognized in this garb."

They were not seen, however, and a few minutes later had reached the port, where they embarked in one of the large boats which lay at the dock waiting to take passengers out to the steamer that was at anchor in the offing.

The sailors on the French ship declined to allow the new-comers to board their vessel at such an unusual hour, and as in obedience to their orders the boatmen were moving away, Mourad and Sivasti sprang forward and took possession of the oars. In another minute the boat was directly under the steamer's ladder, and Mourad, springing lightly up stepped on deck, and in a stern voice commanded the sailors to go and awake their captain.

When the latter appeared, the visitor was conducted to the saloon, and on the captain's asking what his business might be, Mourad threw off his cloak and hood, and appeared in the

rich costume of the Prime Minister, with the red cap and the short sabre of which the sheath and handle were encrusted with jewels.

The captain of *L'Afrique* recognized Mourad immediately, as he had often met him at the house of the French consul.

"I was not expecting this honor," he said, with a bow; "your Excellency will be kind enough to excuse my disordered attire."

Mourad interrupted him, saying:

"No apologies are needed, captain, for I am not here in my former capacity. I have been deprived of office—you must have heard the news,"

"There was rumor to that effect, but I make no doubt that the Bey will reconsider his action."

"Thanks for the supposition," said Mourad smiling, "but you are wrong. My successor is already named, and in order to escape persecution I am obliged to take flight to France."

"That is easily done, your Excellency. We leave here at five o'clock in the afternoon. We reach Bône to-morrow, and after a short stop at Corsica, will arrive at Marseilles on Saturday."

"I know all that, captian, but I dare not wait until the afternoon. I want you to set off at once."

"That is impossible; my cargo is not yet on board, and I am also obliged to wait for the

mails. The rules of the company are stringent, and I dare not break them."

"I will pay a large sum of money to the company—and to you, if you will oblige me in this."

"I must refuse both for myself and for the Valery company. The contracts cannot be broken."

Mourad scowled with vexation, for it had not occurred to him that there was anything he could not buy.

"Can you not remain here? They will not come to seek you," said the captain. But Mourad shook his head.

"It would not do. I left home with a flourish of trumpets, as it were, and there will certainly be search made for me before you weigh anchor—"

"I have an idea!" cried the captain, suddenly; "there is a little steamer which runs between here and Tripoli—you may have seen it in the harbor—the captain would no doubt accept your offer. I will ask him, if you like."

"Do so, I shall be very grateful," said Mourad; "offer him whatever you think proper for the service."

"I see that you have two companions," said the captain. "I will invite them to come on board, and you can all have some coffee while you wait."

At the end of a half-hour the friendly captain returned, and reported that the little vessel was

already getting up steam in order to accommodate its intended passengers.

"The captain can take you only as far as Bône, where, however, you will be as safe as if you were in France," said the Frenchman; "and when I arrive there to-morrow you can, if you wish, take passage with me for Marseilles."

"That will suit us perfectly," said Mourad; "and as I see a number of small boats putting out from the shore, I suspect that we are not very safe at present. We had better go on board the *Tripoli* at once."

The captain escorted his guests to the ladder and bade them farewell till the next day, and at nine o'clock they were moving out of the harbor. They were only just in time for the news of Mourad's escape had spread from Tunis to Goletta, and the water was covered with small craft designed to intercept him.

The gruff captain of the *Tripoli* paid no attention to the excitement round him, but considering that his first duty was to his passengers, and also anxious to earn the promised reward, raised his anchor, and steamed away, capsizing several small boats which had gathered round him.

First fire, and now shipwreck, accompanied Mourad's departure!

Sivasti stood up on the hurricane deck, waving

his hand to those who were left thus unexpectedly behind, and exclaimed, gleefully:

"Farewell, my friends, I hope I shall never see you again! Farewell to Tunis and all it contains; and now for Paris, and the Parisians!

The little steamer passed by the ruins of ancient Carthage, where the chapel of St. Louis was gleaming in the morning sunshine, and the captain, ordering all speed to be made, turned to his passengers and said, gruffly:

"I want to pass those devilish capes which are between us and Bône, before the *mistral* takes hold of us."

CHAPTER V.

THE captain of the *Tripoli* had good reason to fear the Northwest wind, for the equinoctial storm of 187—made terrible havoc on the Mediterranean and the coast of Africa. The little steamer had hardly doubled Cape Bône (which was called by the ancients Mercury's Promontory), when the wind became more violent; the square sails were furled hurriedly, the vessel rolled from side to side, and the passengers, already ill, began to think that shipwreck was their doom. In reply to Sivasti's lamentations, the captain remarked that in just such a wind, though perhaps a little more to the west, the *Auvergne* was lost last February. She

was a larger boat than the *Tripoli*, with a crew of thirty-one, while he had but seven, and the captain knew the coast perfectly, "which I do not," said the speaker, cheerfully.

"Stop!" cried Sivasti; "what is the use of telling me this?"

"One must converse," returned the captain; "it helps to pass the time."

"Is there any danger for us? What are the probabilities?"

"The probabilities are that we shall go to the bottom. Still, there is a chance, perhaps fortune will favor us—there is no knowing. I must call your attention to the fact that the captain of the *Auvergne* had no advantage over us in knowing the coast, for he was lost just the same." After a minute he sprang up, saying: "Go down to the cabin—there is a white squall coming! You will be washed off the deck."

"Can anything be worse than this rolling!" said Sivasti.

"Worse!" repeated the captain; "why man alive, this is young lady's weather compared to what we shall have before long!"

The secretary, in great alarm, crept down to the cabin, where Mourad lay stretched on a sofa.

"Where is Fatmah!" asked the ex-minister in a feeble voice, as Sivasti threw himself on the other couch.

"She is prostrate like ourselves in the next cabin, but she makes no complaint. She has all the resignation that the Mussulman religion teaches. But we are not so happy—there is no cure for sea-sickness, and the captain says this is only young lady's weather!"

The captain was right. At about nine o'clock in the evening, a terrific storm broke over the Mediterranean. The water deluged the steamer's decks, and the *Tripoli* was driven along wildly before the waves. The captain was unable to get his bearings, and had no idea where he was; a dense fog concealed the light-houses on the shore, and the sounding-lead was of little use. At two o'clock in the morning the man on watch reported that the vessel was nearing the breakers; the captain sprang to his side, saw that it was true, and immediately made every effort to alter the course, but in vain. The storm was so furious that nothing could be done, the rudder rope broke, and when the anchors were lowered, the chains snapped suddenly, and the vessel plunged forward to the breakers. There was nothing to be done but to keep the vessel straight, and run her up on the sand with her stern to the billows, and in this last effort her captain was successful. Meanwhile, Mourad and Sivasti made two or three efforts to reach the deck, but such was the tossing and rolling of the steamer, that before

they had got half-way up the steps, they were thrown back again violently upon each other. When the *Tripoli* ran on to the breakers, they heard the pounding of the waters, and gave themselves up for lost.

The Mussulman blood in Mourad's veins triumphed over his European education, and he was calm and philosophical in the face of death.

"We are doomed," sighed Sivasti.

"Very well, my friend, we can do nothing to prevent it," Mourad answered, cheerfully; but as he spoke the grinding and rocking ceased suddenly.

"What can be the meaning of this?" said Sivasti, with a gleam of hope in his eyes.

"Let us go up and see. I would rather die on deck than down in this hole," said Mourad, carelessly; and when they reached the companion-way, they met Fatmah who had also left her cabin to seek the deck. She was pale, but perfectly calm, and resigned to the decree of Fate. On reaching the deck, the travellers found that the vessel was lying on her side, and the waves were dashing over her with ever increasing violence; the crew were obliged to cling to the railing of the deck.

The captain seeing his passengers, joined them, saying:

"Did I not tell you that we should have a storm?"

"If you had warned us a little sooner," said Sivasti, "we would have decided to remain in Tunis."

"And be assassinated, or thrown into prison! You are much better here—we are but a stone's throw from Algeria."

"I hoped we had reached French coast," said Mourad, anxiously.

"Not we, indeed!" exclaimed the captain; "we are on the island of Tabarka—one of my men knows the place—it belongs to the Bey, so you are at home."

A huge wave deluged Sivasti at that moment, and as he picked himself up he said, ruefully:

"You call this being at home?"

"You have nothing to complain of," said the captain calmly, "for if the vessel does not turn over and send us all into the sea during the night, we shall be able to get ashore at daybreak."

With this prospect before them, the passengers and crew passed the night, clinging despairingly to the wreck, while the waves rose and rolled and dashed over them.

When morning dawned, the captain announced his intention of going ashore, but Mourad exclaimed dubiously:

"We shall only be going from bad to worse. I

know the Island of Tabarka by reputation—it is infested with Arabs, who are no more nor less than thieves and assassins.”

“You have been in power a long time,” said the captain. “I wonder you have not put a stop to their outrages.”

“I did not know that I was to be shipwrecked on this coast,” said the ex-Minister, dryly.

CHAPTER VI.

“THE citadel is but a short distance from here,” said the captain, when, with the crew and passengers, he had reached dry land at last.

Mourad was very weary, but Sivasti tried to reassure him by saying that the news of his disgrace could not have yet reached this obscure spot, and soldiers in the citadel would be proud to do honor to the Prime Minister. As to the Arab bandits, there were none in sight. Mourad and his two companions concealed their treasure and chests as best they could beneath their bournous, and the little party set off toward the citadel.

They had not gone very far, however, when a band of fierce-looking Arabs started up from behind the rocks, brandishing their cutlasses, and yelling savagely. The sailors prepared to stand on

the defensive, but at a sign from their captain lowered their arms and tried to make their escape, but were speedily captured, bound and thrown upon the ground. The bandits, on approaching the rest of the travellers, were evidently disconcerted at finding, by the dress of Mourad and his two companions, that they had displayed hostility to their own countrymen and co-religionists, instead of to Europeans and base Christian dogs as they had at first supposed.

Mourad, taking advantage of their dismay addressed them sternly, saying that he was an officer in the Bey's army, and ordering them to conduct him and his friends to the citadel, where they would be richly rewarded. His speech might have had the desired effect if he had not been so unfortunate as to put aside his bournous to lay his hand on his sabre. The richly jewelled hilt and sheath caught the eye of the bandits who gazed at it greedily for a moment, and then drew away to consult with each other and consider the stranger's words. They soon arrived at the conclusion that three of these travellers were clad in rich apparel, under their dark bournous, and that each carried a square chest, which must certainly contain jewels of priceless value.

The poor, ragged, half-starved Arabs could not resist the thought of such extraordinary booty. Allah, the prophet, had thrown it into their way,

and it would be folly, even impiety, to let it escape them.

While they consulted, Moura¹ and his friends, with the captain and mate of the unfortunate *Tripoli*, prepared to defend themselves, the Tunisians putting the jewel chests on the ground at their feet, and the five persons standing in a circle, back to back, armed with knives and daggers. Fatmah picked up an axe, which one of the sailors had dropped, and did her share in defending her master's wealth. She had thrown off her cloak, her veil dropped from her face, and she stood, with one foot on the precious box, her shapely head thrown back, her arm upraised, her dark hair floating over her bosom and shoulders; her eyes, no longer languid, flashed fire, and her red lips, slightly parted, displayed the pearly teeth.

The robbers looked at her in admiration, and said to each other that here was a prize worth trying for. The air resounded with their yells, which were answered by Mourad and Sivasti, as they fought, exchanging rapid blows, but the Arabs were gathering closer around the travellers, and their eyes were fixed jealously, hungrily, upon the chests.

At last, one of the bandits aimed a powerful blow with a hatchet at one of the coveted objects, and split it open, scattering the jewels on the ground. Gold, rubbies, sapphires, emeralds, pearls

and diamonds flew about, blazing in the sunlight and rolling over the sand. The Arabs fascinated, maddened by the sight, fought on with increased vigor; they forgot the value of the gems and thought only of their brilliancy and beauty; they thirsted and hungered to gain possession of the shining stones. Another chest was broken, and than the third, and each time the same display of wondrous color and brightness followed; and now the Arabs, creeping along the sand, snatched at the treasures frantically, as starving creatures might grasp for food. The travellers were exhausted with the combat, and could do no more than see the riches gathered up into the folds of the bandits cloaks, and when the Arabs had picked up the last jewel they took to flight suddenly, forgetting the costly sabre which had first attracted them, forgetting even Fatmah whom they had intended to take captive.

“We might just as well have escaped by land as I advised,” said Sivasti sadly, to his master who had thrown himself upon the ground in despair. “You feared being robbed in the desert, and you have been robbed on the sea-shore; the only difference is that your treasure has enriched Tunisian thieves instead of Algerians. That is some consolation.”

As he spoke the captain exclaimed that a band

of soldiers from the citadel was hastening to their relief.

"It would be useless for them to follow the brigands," said Mourad; "for the jewels will have been long since hidden in the sand and the crevices of the rocks, and it will do me no good to have the thieves punished, even if the soldiers could catch them, which they cannot hope to do."

"And if our troops should chance to come across any of the treasure, it would go into their own pockets, I am sure," added Sivasti, who had not much opinion of his countrymen's integrity.

The officer with his soldiers now appeared, and not knowing Mourad by sight, he believed him to be merely what he declared himself—a civil functionary of high rank sent to Algeria by the Bey on important business, and cast on this shore by the storm. The ex-minister thought it prudent to say nothing of his loss, as this might involve inquiries and delay, but he requested to be escorted to the citadel at once. On the way Mourad remarked to his secretary in a loud tone:

"Not a word must be said of this catastrophe when we reach France. I have the reputation of being enormously rich, and we must live in that reputation for a while. The jewels that I have about me will bring two or three hundred thousand francs, and we shall soon begin to make more. That

will not be difficult, as I am believed to be a millionaire—I know the Parisians.”

The next day the little party set out again, and before sunset reached the French possessions.

“We are safe at last!” cried Mourad.

“We should be still more safe if we had our little chests under our arms,” said Sivasti, sadly.

“They were dreadfully heavy” said the philosopher with a smile of contentment.

The travellers reached Bône without further adventure, and as they were standing on a quay, looking at the shipping, Mourad remarked suddenly:

“How very like *L’Afrique* that steamer is!”

“That is not very extraordinary,” said a voice behind them; “since it happens to be *L’Afrique* herself.”

They turned in surprise and beheld their friend the French captain, whom they had last seen at Tunis.

“You here yet?” exclaimed Mourad.

“The storm prevented my leaving,” returned the captain. “I only arrived here this morning; I was very much disturbed about you, but I see that the little steamer behaved herself well.”

“Oh, very well,” said Sivasti; “only that she has one peculiarity—she prefers the bottom of the sea to the surface.”

They then related their experiences, omitting,

however, all mention of the loss of the jewels, and the captain informed them that he was to leave Bône in an hour.

"You will have most charming traveling companions," he said, "a distinguished artist, Mr. de Bussine and his daughter, Parisians."

"Is she a beauty?" asked Mourad, eagerly.

"She is, indeed——"

"Dark or fair?"

"Fair. Her hair is a warm, sunny color, and her eyes, heavenly blue, and with such an expression!"

"I am very much interested in my fellow-passenger," said Mourad, "for I adore blondes. The truth is I have had too much of dark beauty—I am tired to death of black hair and black eyes."

Fatmah, seated at a distance from the speakers, did not hear these words; and if she had, they would not have troubled her much, for in the East women do not expect undivided affection and admiration.

"There is their baggage going on board," said the captain. "Mr. de Bussine has a large number of paintings, of most of which he means to dispose in Paris. He and his daughter have spent the last three years in the Algerian desert, and are now going home to France."

"What are the subjects of his paintings?" asked Mourad, stroking his moustache.

"They are chiefly landscapes, I believe, or studies of Algerian life."

"If I like them, I may perhaps purchase of the artist, for I shall be furnishing a gallery in Paris," said Mourad, with a grand air; and the captain proposing to show him to his steamer, the three Tunisians went on board, and were assigned to comfortable cabins.

"He is impressed with the idea of my great wealth," said Mourad to Sivasti, when they were standing on the deck. "I told you how it would be—my lucky star is still in the ascendant." After a pause he exclaimed, suddenly: "Look, those must be our fellow-travelers! The captain did not exaggerate the young lady's beauty—what a figure, what a smile, what glorious hair!"

"Remember you are no longer in Tunis, your excellency," said Sivasti, with a warning glance at his master; "you cannot buy French women as you do Circassians."

Susanne de Bussine had indeed fulfilled the promise of her girlhood—her beauty, then only in the bud, had now attained a perfection seldom seen. She had reached the deck and was talking to the captain, in a voice which was at once full and sweet:

"I am so glad to be on board," she said; "it is like being in France itself!"

"You long for your native land, then?"

“Not for the land exactly, but I do long to see a grave that is there—my mother’s grave.”

CHAPTER IV.

THERE were but few first-class passengers, for many persons had been frightened by the stormy weather of the last few days. Experienced travelers, however, knew that after such a tempest the sea was likely to be very calm; just as with man, a long fit of anger is apt to be succeeded by a state of exhaustion and quiet. Among these experienced passengers was a Mr. de Canot, disciple of the famous conjurer, Robert Houdin; this young man’s skill in sleight-of-hand was remarkable, but he made no use of it beyond amusing himself and his friends, as he possessed an ample income. There was also on board a Mr. Lionel Murdon, younger son of Lord Murdon, well-known in England as well as in Ireland, which was his native country. Young Lionel was a jovial fellow of twenty-five, with a bright, laughing expression; his blue eyes veiled by long lashes, and his delicate, refined features making him look perhaps a trifle effeminate, but the strongly marked eyebrows, the firm lines of the mouth, and the clear steady glance showed that, mingled with

amiability, there was a good deal of energy and resolution. He had been traveling in Africa for both amusement and instruction, and at Biskra had met George de Bussine and his daughter. Susanne's beauty, sweetness, and vivacity had made a deep impression upon him, and it was not mere chance that brought these two together on the homeward voyage. On the evening following that of their departure from Bône, the passengers of *L'Afrique* were gathered in the saloon where the port-holes were wide open to admit of a full view of the mountains of Sardinia, which stood sharply outlined against the purple-tinted sky. Lionel was seated near Mlle. de Bussine, talking gaily about his sojourn in Africa, telling her of his tramps in the desert land and his ascents of mountains, for, like all English travelers, he would have thought his tour a failure if he had not been on the top of every eminence. She listened with evident interest to his recital, and seemed to be perfectly happy at his side.

At a little distance from the young pair, Mourad sat gazing at Susanne, for her blonde beauty, her slight graceful figure, her charm of manner, and quick glance of intelligence seemed to have a fascination for the Oriental, so long accustomed to a different style of womanhood.

As to Fatmah, she was, with the permission of Mourad, posing for George de Bussine. The two

were seated near the table, and by the light of the swinging-lamps the artist was painting a portrait of the beautiful Circassian; she had consented to remove a part of her veil, and her dark, languid eyes, which were fixed upon the painter, seemed to disturb and bewilder him. He held his pencil unsteadily, and at times neglected to put it to the paper—the artist slumbered in him, and the man awakened. When the steamer reached Cape Bonifacio, it bore away from the coast; night succeeded the twilight, and the captain, after giving his orders, came down to join his passengers.

“How shall we amuse ourselves?” he said cheerily, “it is such a beautiful night that no one will think of retiring early. Let us have some music, the piano is not bad.”

But there were no musicians in the company, so the proposition was abandoned and a game of cards was also declined.

“Well, I know what we can do,” said the captain, who was in the best of spirits and not to be discouraged. He went up to M. de Canot, and after a few minutes of urging in a low tone, said aloud: “I knew you would kindly consent, and as a reward I promise that the next time you take passage in my ship you shall have the best cabin on board, and weather like to-night’s.”

The young man rose laughingly, and said in

response to the questioning looks of his fellow-passengers :

"I have undertaken to show you a few tricks, such as are practiced by card sharpers,"

"Is it possible that such 'frauds' still exist?" asked Lionel. "I thought that the race had been extirpated."

"Not by any means, I assure you. They still infest the clubs of Paris, and it is very seldom that one is detected. Their skill and quickness is almost incredible, for there is no card-game at which they cannot win, if they choose."

"Show us some of their tricks," said the captain, and Mr. de Canot, having asked the company to choose the game, they decided upon *ecarté*, as that was the most generally known.

Lionel Murdon and the impromptu "card sharper" sat down together, and the captain produced a pack of cards.

"I defy anybody here to detect me cheating, though I shall certainly do so," said de Canot, "and you have the advantage over ordinary players of having been warned; besides that, having nothing at stake, you are perfectly cool, which is seldom their case." He proceeded to shuffle the cards slowly and carefully, but without looking at them, and then asked his opponent to cut.

"I suppose you will turn up the king," said Lionel. But the other answered:

"No, I prefer to have him in my hand—to turn him up often would excite suspicion."

In a few minutes he had won three consecutive games, without allowing his adversary to score a single point, and then he laid down the cards and gave his audience a detailed explanation of the various classes and grades of "card sharpers", and their modes of acquiring large fortunes at play.

Mourad listened as if fascinated. George de Bussine was deeply and painfully interested, the other members of the party merely astonished and amused.

"Shall we have another game?" said de Canot to Murdon, and the latter acquiesced laughingly, declaring that he knew what the result would be.

"I shall give you a very good hand," said de Canot, dealing the cards. "I hope you will make the point."

"Not if you have the king."

"Indeed, I have not got him this time; see, he is here at the bottom of the pack, said de Canot, showing the card.

"Then I wager a *louis* that I shall win."

"A *louis* it shall be—for the poor."

Lionel held four trumps and the queen of diamonds, but he lost the point, for his adversary held better trumps and the king of diamonds!

"You see," said the latter, smiling, "I gave you good cards to make you bet high."

"Do you mean to say, you knew every card I held?"

"Every one. It was done in the dealing—see now—I have given you the seven of spades, king of hearts, ace of diamonds—is that correct?"

"Perfectly," said Lionel; "but you did not look at them."

"I used what is known among card sharpers as the 'rainbow deal,' which consists in throwing the cards out in this way, making it describe an arch, and when they are at the highest point I can see them for an instant. Beware of the man who deals in that way at baccarat!"

"Can one cheat at baccarat also?" asked Mourad in surprise; and de Canot requesting the captain to lend him some dried peas or beans, divided them among those persons who wished to play.

"Are you going to have a regular baccarat bank with two *tableaux*?" asked George de Bussine, watching the preparations with keen interest.

"Yes, it shall be precisely as they play at the Paris clubs," replied Mourad.

"I see that you are acquainted with the game, sir."

"Yes," said George. "I have played it."

"Sit here then, please, and be the punter——"

"No, no, I do not play cards," cried George.

"But we are only to play for beans, not for money—you cannot object to that!"

"Yes, I have made a vow not to even touch a card," said de Bussine, firmly; and Mourad, observing his agitation, said in a low tone to the secretary:

"He has touched a good many cards in his day, I'll warrant."

"Yes, there is some mystery there," said Sivasti. "And I am sure his daughter could solve it. See how she is watching him—what a lovely creature she is!"

The baccarat table was now ready, and the banker taking up a pack of cards, begged his adversaries to observe that he had made no preparations whatever and had no accomplice.

"An accomplished fraud," he said; "can find numberless opportunities of marking the cards so that he knows every one in his opponents' hands; he also makes use of the *portée*, or prepared pack, which he keeps in a secret pocket of his coat, and introduces in the course of the shuffling. This deception, however, is no longer used except in playing with very young or inexperienced persons. But a fraud of the highest order—a Philosopher, as he calls himself, scorns all such assistance, plays without any accomplice, and with cards which are absolutely new, and just out of their envelope. He has wonderful delicacy of touch, his finger tips

having been purposely made tender by the use of pumice stone or some such substance, so that he can actually distinguish the court cards from the others by feeling the extra coloring matter on them. One of these gentlemen told me that he had practised for two years in front of a looking-glass in order to become expert in substituting one card for another in dealing."

"Why, Mr. de Canot," cried one of the party, "you ought to give a course of lectures on the subject of card sharpening! Your audience would learn so much that they would forswear gambling forever, and how much misery would be spared to mothers and wives!"

"I fear it would do no good," said the young man; "all these tricks have been exposed and yet there is as much gambling as ever."

The speaker then shuffled the cards, and the game began. At the end of a quarter of an hour every bean on the table was in one heap before the banker, and yet the lookers on had not been able to detect the slightest sign of cheating on the part of Mr. de Canot.

After a few more games and explanations the company rose, and thanking their entertainer dispersed for the night. Some went to their cabins, and others to the deck to enjoy the soft balmy air a little longer. They were now passing Corsica, and its long chain of mountains

rose in superb distinctness toward the starry sky. Susanne stood at her father's side and whispered lovingly:

“Poor, dear papa, how you have been deceived and robbed! I am so thankful that that part of your life is over forever!”

Mourad was sitting alone at the stern of the vessel, with his elbows on the railing, and his head in his hands. He was plunged in revery—perhaps thinking how he might replace his lost fortune.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER lying at anchor for two hours off Ajaccio, the French steamer turned toward Marseilles. As the time for parting drew near, Mourad, now completely infatuated by the beauty of Susanne, resolved to make sure of seeing her again. For this purpose, he addressed George de Bussine on the subject of his art, saying:

“I have not ventured to ask you to show me any of your paintings, Mr. de Bussine; but I understand from the captain that they are masterpieces. Perhaps you will let me see them when we reach Paris. I expect to be absent from my native land for some years, and I should be glad

to have some landscapes or scenes of Eastern life to remind me of it. I do not speak out of mere curiosity, but would be glad to purchase such pictures at a good price."

George de Bussine was delighted with Mourad's proposal.

"I shall be only too glad, your excellency," he said, "to show you my paintings; and if any of them should happen to please you, I would not exact a very high price, as my name is, as yet, almost entirely unknown."

"That would not influence me in the least," said Mourad; "for when I happen to like a picture, I never ask the artist's name—unrecognized talent is just as acceptable to me as that which is celebrated."

De Bussine bowed his acknowledgements of this delicate compliment, and asked the ex-minister where he could be found in Paris.

"I do not know as yet," replied Mourad. "But if you will kindly give me your address I shall be pleased to call upon you."

"Unfortunately, I have no address at present," said George. "I cannot say where I shall take up my abode, as I have been absent from Paris for three years."

"Well, call upon me at the Grand Hotel next week," said Mourad; and then he observed that if agreeable to Mr. de Bussine, the Circassian girl,

Fatmah, should resume her sittings, as soon as the artist had secured a studio.

The prime minister, with his usual shrewdness, had long ago perceived that the brilliant beauty of his slave-girl had made a deep impression upon the artist, and he was willing to profit by any circumstance which might tend to produce opportunities for his own closer acquaintance with Susanne.

Fatmah, herself, he regarded merely as a piece of property, for which he had paid a high price; but he gave no thought to her personal feelings, having long since grown tired of the languid beauty of the Orient. While Mourad was thus arranging matters with her father, Susanne was seated at the other end of the deck talking with Lionel Murdon.

"Do you mean to say," cried the young man suddenly, "that we must never see each other again, after all the delightful hours we have passed together under tents in the desert, or in the shade of the palm trees? Remember how we kept on meeting, as if it were our fate to be together—and now you calmly tell me we must part forever."

"What would be the use of our meeting," she said sadly, "when our lives lead in opposite directions. Remember that when we first knew each other, I was but a child, and you were my merry

companion; we were happy together it is true, but in three years the child has become a woman. Calm reflection tells me that our spheres in life are not the same, and we must therefore be strangers to each other."

"But why," he said, impatiently; and before he had time to say more, she continued gently:

"Think of your family, what would they say of a penniless French girl, the daughter of an obscure artist?"

"He will not always be obscure," said the young man.

"Perhaps not, if he continues to work; but I fear that the distractions of Paris may be too powerful for him. He has always worked as much from necessity as from a true love of his art."

"But he will never play again, I am sure. You heard how decidedly he spoke to Mr. de Canot in the saloon."

"Alas!" said the girl, sighing; "the fact of his being so emphatic is just what makes me dread a return of his infatuation. It is as if he mistrusted himself, and tried to strengthen his resolution by constantly recalling it. If he were entirely cured, all this would be unnecessary."

"In fact, you live in constant dread, Susanne, just as your poor mother did;" and as she assented silently to his words, he whispered tenderly: "do

not send me away, dear, you may need a friend—who knows.”

She held out her hand to him, and said with a soft smile :

“You are right, Lionel, and I could have no truer friend than you. You will come to see me whenever you are in Paris, and I shall always welcome you after your travels. You will be sedate and serious then, probably married.”

“Cruel, cruel!” cried he, and the girl murmuring, “cruel to myself!” turned away from him to hide her tears.

Early the next morning, George de Bussine and his daughter arrived in Paris. He was fully acquainted with the details of the trial and conviction of his brother Lucian, for a Paris newspaper had accidentally fallen into his hands, and he would have instantly returned home, if he had not received a letter from his brother, who commanded him in the most imperative terms to remain where he was.

Lucian assured him that his confession of guilt would have no result other than the disgrace of his child to whom he was bound to devote himself. Lecomte added that in all probability he would be able, by his good conduct in prison, to have the period of his detention shortened. After a short struggle, George promised to obey, and Lucian's mind was at rest. He continued to write.

letters of counsel and encouragement to his brother, and still more often loving and paternal ones to Susanne, who never had the least suspicion of the dreary place in which the welcome lines were penned.

In the third year of their sojourn in Africa, George de Bussine received a line from his brother, who ordered him to return home at once, and to telegraph on their arrival to Mr. Petit-homme, who would meet them at the railway station and conduct them to their new domicile. On reaching Paris, Susanne caught sight of Cæsarina's little figure on the platform, and, hastening toward her, embraced her lovingly.

"Where is my father, Lucian?" she asked, and Mrs. Petit-homme answered, slowly:

"You will see him to-morrow, my dear child; we did not expect you until then. Your uncle has been traveling on business. He left the Bank some time ago and took another position, which has often obliged him to leave Paris; and, although most anxious to see you, he is unable to reach here to-day."

Cornelius Petit-homme now appeared, with the largest of traveller's trunks upon his broad shoulders. When they were all seated in the carriage, and Cæsarina had expressed her rapture at the grace and beauty of Susanne, Mr. de Bussine asked where they were going.

"To Montmartre," returned Mrs. Petit-homme, "where Mr. Lucian has hired a comfortable little house for you in a quiet neighborhood. There is a fine studio in it."

"What a good idea," cried Susanne, "to choose Montmartre. We shall be so near the cemetery; I can go there every day."

She then plied Cæsarina with questions respecting her mother's grave, and was pleased to hear that it had been carefully tended. After an hour's drive, they stopped before an unpretending, though attractive looking, little house.

The young girl ran up the stairs to the second story, went into one of the rooms, and looked around in amazement. It was an exact reproduction of the chamber in which her mother died. She recognized the curtains and furniture, the pictures, books and ornaments, all arranged in their proper order, just as Susanne had seen them last. She sat down on the sofa and burst into tears, while Cæsarina stood in the doorway, feeling proud of her work, which had been in accordance with Lucian Lecomte's strict instructions. After a few minutes Susanne rose, and following Cæsarina into the adjoining room, she beheld with delight all those objects which she had been so grieved to part with on leaving her childhood home.

"Ah, Uncle Lucian," she cried, smiling through

her tears, "it is all your doing. Why do you not come to me now, that I may put my arms around your neck and thank you for your goodness?"

She then set out for the Cemetery, accompanied by Mr. Petit-homme, while George de Bussine seized the opportunity to ask Cæsarina for news of his brother.

"Why does he not come to us?" said de Bussine. "I supposed that he had been liberated."

"His term has been shortened," said the woman, "on account of his good conduct; but he will not be able to leave until to-morrow noon, when he will come directly here."

"Thank Heaven!" said the brother; "his martyrdom is ended at last."

"It has been a long one," said Cæsarina drily.

She had given her word of honor to Lucian Lecomte that she would not in any way let George suspect that she knew his secret; yet she could not deny herself the satisfaction of making him realize how much his brother had suffered for him.

"I saw Mr. Lucian yesterday," she said; and the other exclaimed in surprise:

"Did you go all the way to Melun to visit him?"

"No, indeed, Mr. George; my husband and I have been living at Melun for the last three years. You must know," she returned, "that, after losing

Mr. Lucian, Cornelius and I found that, instead of making money on the Bourse, we were steadily losing; our little fortune did not grow as it used to, and one day my husband said to me, 'my dear, I have a great mind to take a position as *Confectionnaire*.' 'What is that?' said I; and he told me that it was a man who superintended the work of the inmates of a prison, or other public institution. When I asked him how he could get such a position, he replied that he had already found one, for the supervisor of the basket-makers at Melun had just died. Then I understood that Cornelius had applied for this situation for the purpose of being near Mr. Lucian, and making some money. I opened my arms to embrace the dear man, and allowed him to lift me up and give me a kiss. He deserved that for having accidentally hit upon such a good idea. We have been at Melun ever since, and, although I have not been allowed to live in the prison, I have often seen your brother, who was appointed our bookkeeper."

"How devoted to him you have been," said George.

"It was only our duty," she replied; "for he would not have been in prison at all, if we had not refused to lend him the money he asked of us."

"He asked money of you?"

"Yes; when he found that his safe had been robbed, he came and asked us for a loan to save him from ruin, and we let him go away empty-handed, miserable misers that we were!"

She clasped her hands remorsefully, and then went on:

"Since the day we first saw him dressed in the prison uniform, with his hair and beard shaved off, his face as pale as death, and his hollow eyes looking at us so sadly from behind the iron bars, we have thought of nothing but of relieving his misery. We have been able to do him only small services, however, such as sending his letters to you and to Susanne, taking care of your wife's grave, and hiring and preparing this house for you."

"Is my brother much changed," said George.

"Changed!" she cried; "you will hardly recognize him. I must remember to tell Susanne that he has had a serious illness, for she will be shocked to see him without his hair and beard, and pale and wasted like a skeleton. Poor man, he has had nothing to nourish him—a little thin soup, with dry bread and potatoes, or a few beans, have been his dinner for the last three years. On Christmas Day and other holidays, a morsel of beef, and never any tea or coffee. Nothing but plain water three times a day; this is how your brother has lived. But worst of all, he has not

been allowed tobacco in any form—he who is so fond of smoking—think of that, Mr. George.”

“Could you not have given him some tobacco without its being known?”

“He would not have taken it,” she exclaimed; “he would not break one of the prison rules. Not that he was afraid of punishment; indeed, if he had not had a noble motive and an heroic spirit, he need not have gone to prison at all.”

“What do you mean?” said George, tremulously; and Cæsarina looked at him fixedly, as she answered:

“I mean that I have long thought your brother was suffering the penalty of another’s crime.”

George de Bussine made no reply to Cæsarina’s last words, and a long pause ensued.

“Mr. Lucian,” observed the woman at last, “has by his good conduct, won the confidence of the prison officials, who allow him as many privileges as possible. This has roused the jealousy of some of his fellow-prisoners, and they have for a long time tried to injure him, by accusing him of various small misdemeanors. They have not yet, however, succeeded in doing him harm, and to-morrow, thank Heaven! he will be beyond their reach.”

At this moment, Susanne entered the room, exclaiming:

“Oh, why does not my father Lucian come,

that I may thank him for all his goodness? He has taken such care of dear mamma's grave—it is covered with most beautiful flowers!”

CHAPTER VI.

CORNELIUS PETIT-HOMME, on returning to his duties in the prison work-rooms, took the first opportunity to lean over his book-keeper and say in a low tone, “they have come!”

Lucian Lecomte exclaimed, joyfully:

“Have you seen them? Are they well?”

“Yes, perfectly well,” returned the other; “indeed, your brother seems to have grown younger, and Susanne is the most beautiful creature I have ever seen; she has grown and improved so much that you will hardly know her.”

“Not know her?” repeated Lucian, with his sad smile. “Indeed, I should be able to recognize her among a thousand women; for three long years I have never ceased to see her—I have watched her growing and becoming more lovely day by day. In the midst of my dreary nights she has been the bright, shining star which has consoled and cheered me”

“Well, you will see your star to-morrow,” said Cornelius; and the other added, with a sigh:

"It seems as if I can hardly wait so long." After a pause Cornelius asked :

"Have your enemies here given you any more trouble?"

"No," said Lecomte ; "for the two ringleaders, Sagot, the cabinet-maker, and Brazier, the notary, were sent to the Hall of Discipline yesterday."

"And before they are let out," said Cornelius, with an air of satisfaction, "you will be far away from here, and have nothing more to fear."

The Hall of Discipline was a large, low, badly-lighted room, with white-washed walls, and its only furniture a row of wooden stools. At one end of the room, behind a grating, sat the wardens in charge, while the prisoners marched round slowly in single file, keeping step with each other, and conversing only by stealth when the guards were not looking. Every ten minutes the men were allowed to sit down on the stools, but were obliged to keep their bodies perfectly erect, their feet together, and their hands resting on their knees. At the end of five minutes they were ordered to resume the dreary march, and this lasted from six o'clock in the morning until eight at night.

It was now nearly seven o'clock in the evening, and Lucian Lecomte's two enemies, Sagot and Brazier, were marching round this Hall with many of their comrades. When they reached that

part of the room which was most distant from the guards, Sagot whispered to Brazier, who was just in front of him :

“Lecomte will leave to-morrow.”

“Yes,” said the ex-notary, without turning his head, “unless we can think of some way of keeping him here.”

The guard behind the grating called out sternly: “One, two—one, two—left, right—left, right!” But when the procession had passed the officers, the two prisoners resumed their whisper.

“I hate Lecomte,” said Brazier, “for he has been twice put above me. At La Grand Roquette he took my place in the Library, and here he has been made book-keeper in the work-rooms—but for him I should have had the place. Besides that, we have both applied to have our term shortened, and of course his petition was granted and mine refused. If he could only be compelled to remain here, I don’t know what I would not give!”

“It would be better for you if you did know, for then you could tell me, and perhaps I could think of some plan,” said Sagot.

A short pause followed and the notary replied :

“I received a lot of tobacco yesterday, two pounds of each kind for smoking, snuffing, and chewing. I will give you all of it, every ounce, if you will get him in some scrape.”

"Done," said Sagot; and at that moment the bell rang, and the prisoners were marched off to bed.

It was the last night Lecomte had to spend in jail, and the thought that he was so soon to see his brother and his darling niece, kept him awake until nearly daybreak. Visions of the beautiful Susanne flitted through his mind. He seemed to see her arms extended lovingly toward him, her sweet voice murmuring his name; but suddenly a fearful doubt rose within him, and his heart sank with a vague apprehension of disappointment and despair. At five o'clock he arose from his narrow cot, and resumed his customary duties in the work-rooms. Sagot, who had been released from the Hall of Discipline, gave him a sinister glance as he passed by; but Lucian, whose spirit had risen again with the return of day, paid no attention to him.

At half-past ten o'clock in the morning Lecomte was summoned to the Superintendent's room, and never was an order more joyfully obeyed. Mr. Boulard received him with a grave expression of countenance and said:

"I am surprised Lecomte, after all the favor I have shown you, and the trouble I have taken to procure your discharge, to find that you have been endeavoring to injure me."

"I, sir?" said Lucian, in the most profound astonishment.

"Yes, you," returned the other, sternly. "I see that you have been writing to the newspapers. I have just received from Paris an article signed, '*Lucian Lecomte, convict in the Penitentiary of Melun.*'"

Lucian would have protested, but the Superintendent went on.

"The greater part of the article is taken from a report which I had made out to forward to the authorities at Paris; it was lying on the table when you came in here to help me with some accounts; the rest of the article is taken from the book on that shelf. You had no right to send this article without my permission, and above all to sign it in that way. A convict to be writing to the newspapers! What can the Minister think of the discipline maintained here? Doubtless this article is the cause of your discharge not being yet signed."

"Not signed?" cried Lucian, who had until now stood silent and motionless, as if stunned.

"I have not yet received it," said Mr. Boulard. And at the sight of the man's agonized countenance, he was moved with pity.

"Come, be frank with me," he said; "how did you manage to send the article out of this place to a Paris newspaper?"

Lecomte replied in a firm voice :

“ I have never written an article for a newspaper—I swear to you that I know nothing about it. Do you suppose that I would be so foolish as to run such a fearful risk? Do you think that I am anxious to proclaim my wretched position to the world?”

The Superintendent could not help being impressed by his words and manner.

“ It is a conspiracy,” continued Lecomte. “ Some one is trying to be revenged on me.”

“ Whom do you suspect?”

“ There are two men here, who have for some time been trying to injure me.”

“ Who are they?”

“ Brazier, the ex-notary, and Sagot,” replied Lecomte.

The Superintendent reflected for a few minutes, and then ordered that Brazier should be brought before him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ex-notary soon appeared, holding his cap in his long bony fingers, and walking with a peculiar shuffling gait. He wore spectacles, through which his watery little eyes leered sily; and his red eyelids were without lashes.

The superintendent addressed him, sharply :

"I sent for you to come to this room last week, Brazier, to tell you that I could not procure your discharge. While you were here, some one knocked at the door, and I went into the hall, leaving you standing near the table; you were quite alone in the room, and I saw you take up my report and read it. I have heard of your remarkable memory, and know that you made use of it to write an article on Prison Management, which you sent to a Paris newspaper, signed with Lecomte's name."

Brazier's face expressed complete surprise at this sudden accusation.

"Why should I have done such a thing?" he asked.

And the Superintendent answered :

"With the idea perhaps of injuring a comrade, against whom you have long had a grudge."

Brazier looked at Lecomte.

"I have never wished to injure him," said the

ex-notary, shaking his head with humble air. "On the contrary, he has been persecuting me. For three years I have had to bear everything from him, and I have never complained, although he has taken every advantage of his position to find fault with me. He has complained to Mr. Petit-homme of my laziness, and has had me punished unjustly several times. I assure you, sir, that I am the victim, and not he."

The superintendent shook his head, saying:

"I know very well that you have long been envious and jealous of Lecomte, and I do not believe that anything could induce him to break one of the rules of the prison. He has never yet done so to my knowledge, and it is not likely that he would begin now, when he is on the point of leaving the place."

Lucian cast a look of gratitude at the speaker, who, however, signed him to be silent, and Brazier went on:

"Perhaps he thought to attract attention and rouse public interest in himself by giving expression to lofty sentiments."

"How do you know what the sentiments of the article are?" cried the official, "if you have never seen it."

The man replied without the least embarrassment:

"You have just told me, sir, that it was copied

from one of your reports, so I know that its sentiments must be noble and generous."

Not being permitted to continue this complimentary speech, Brazier took a different tone.

"Even if I had written the article," he said, "I should not have been able to send it away, for I am not hand and glove with supervisors of work-rooms and their wives as some people are."

"You may go," said the superintendent.

And when they were again alone, he turned to Lecomte, with a grave face.

"It cannot be denied," he observed, "that you, being so intimate with Petit-homme, have greater facilities for sending letters and other things out of the prison than any one else."

"But I did not write the article," cried Lucian, in desperation. "I swear to you I never heard of it before to-day. Oh, pray believe me, sir, and get me my discharge. It is terrible to have liberty come so near, and then slip away again."

Tears rolled down his cheeks, and Mr. Boulard, deeply moved, said gently:

"I will go to Paris to-morrow—myself—and see what can be done for you, so try to be patient and brave."

Meanwhile the ex-notary was taken back to the work-room, where he saw his confederate, Sagot, sitting on the floor in a corner, working diligently. He soon contrived to find a place beside him and,

as the two sat weaving busily, Brazier said in a low tone:

“My plan has succeeded for the present, but his discharge may arrive at any moment, and then he will go, and you will lose your tobacco. If, however, you can succeed in keeping him here, I will not only give you the tobacco, but I will also solemnly promise to pay you five thousand francs as soon as we have served our term.”

At that moment Lucian Lecomte entered the work-room and took his accustomed place. He was tortured by the thought that Susanne would wonder at his continued absence, and as soon as Mr. Petit-homme appeared he wrote a few lines to his niece, saying that he had been unavoidably detained.

“I shall be going away in ten minutes,” said Cornelius. “I have only to give some directions and explanations to my successor, and then I will carry your note to Susanne.”

Soon after he had taken his departure loud cries were heard at the other end of the room, and the warden in charge ran to see what had happened. Finding that two of the men were fighting fiercely, he rang for his assistants, while most of the other convicts gathered round excitedly. Even the new supervisor ran out of his office, leaving Lecomte alone; the latter did not stir from his place until he heard the

warden shouting for help, and then he started up; but at the same instant a dozen armed assistants rushed into the work-room and seized and bound the combatants, while the other men slunk back to their places. A dead silence followed; the new supervisor returned to his desk with his book-keeper, and in a few minutes, wishing to make some notes in his memorandum book, turned to the spot where he had left it, and was dumb-founded to find it had disappeared.

He naturally suspected Lecomte of stealing it, as he alone had been in the office during the recent excitement, and Mr. Boulard was summoned to the work-room to investigate the matter. Lucian could do no more than assert his innocence, but all the other men asserted their's with equal vehemence, and the superintendent, puzzled at the mystery, caused every one of the convicts to be strictly searched, and then put into the cells in punishment for their having left their places during the fight.

The supervisor, having declared that his notebook contained ten thousand francs with which he had intended to make some important payments, Mr. Boulard thought it advisable to write and inform the authorities that a serious robbery had taken place in the prison. It happened that the person to whom the letter was written was absent from *Melun* at the time, but one of his

assistants hastened to act as deputy, He was a young man of about twenty-six years, who had begun his career as a lawyer in Paris, but not being successful in his profession had, through the influence of his friends, obtained a position in the office of the public-prosecutor. This young and inexperienced, but very zealous, personage made up his mind to solve the mystery of the lost note-book, and to fix the guilt on one of the convicts. After a long search, in the course of which most of the furniture in the office of the work-room was demolished, his perseverance was rewarded, for in a small, skilfully-concealed cavity in the table which Lucian had been using, the missing article was found.

The young deputy could not be expected to know that the cavity had been made long ago by a convict now discharged, and that Sagot had accidentally discovered it. Neither could he know that the former cabinet-maker had availed himself of the confusion caused by the fight in the work-room, to earn the coveted tobacco and the promise of five-thousand francs, by thrusting the supervisor's note-book into the hiding-place.

When the officious young man went into Lecomte's cell and began questioning him brusquely, the latter's patience gave out; after three years of self-repression he felt that his stock of patience was exhausted, and he, who had once

voluntarily submitted to injustice, rebelled at that which was now forced upon him. At the time of his trial he had been reserved and calm, fearing to criminate his brother; but now George was in no danger, so Lucian defended himself with an indignant energy, which was all the more violent for having been so long controlled. Unhappily for him, his attitude impressed his listeners unfavorably as being insolent and defiant, and the result of the investigation was that Lucian Lecomte, instead of being discharged, was ordered into solitary confinement while awaiting the next session of the Court of Assizes.

PART THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

MOURAD had now been in Paris for six months, and had certainly made the most of his time. He had rented a handsome mansion, standing in spacious grounds, and had had it sumptuously decorated and furnished. He had renewed his acquaintance with all those persons of the highest standing whom he had met during his frequent visits to France, and had been pleased, though not surprised, to find that his official troubles with the Bey of Tunis did not in the least deprive him of public esteem. On the contrary, his manner of leaving his country, his setting fire to his palace, and giving his three hundred wives their liberty, was considered an original and brilliant feat, and added greatly to his renown. Those persons who had seen him in Tunis, answered for his colossal wealth, and this fact, even more than his fine appearance and genial manner, soon made him extremely popular. Women welcomed him to their drawing-rooms,

and men urged him to join their clubs; but to the latter he at first returned a negative reply.

"What would be the use of a club to me?" he said. "Those in which cards are not allowed are very dull affairs, and baccarat has no attractions for me, as I never play; I hold gambling in detestation."

"But you would enjoy watching the games," persisted his new friends; "for you would lose nothing, and would be amused at our expense."

He yielded at last to their solicitations, and became a frequent visitor at certain clubs where baccarat was played; his popularity continued to increase, for his purse was ever open to relieve the distress of unlucky players, and he even came to the rescue of bankrupt managers of baccarat rooms.

On many occasions he volunteered the most prudent counsels and friendly warnings to inexperienced players, assuring them that sooner or later they would lose their all, and telling them that if they must play, to beware of the "frauds."

"Those pests," he said, "will not dare to reap their harvests when I am present, for they know that a calm, collected looker-on like me would inevitably detect their tricks; they know, too, that I would not hesitate to expose their knavery, and have them turned out-of-doors. So, my young

friend, if you can not resist the fascination of baccarat, play only when I am present."

In a very short he had acquired such influence in the clubs, that a candidate for admission had only to be introduced as a friend of Mourad-Bey's, to be instantly admitted to the charmed circle.

The secret of all the success and wealth of the once deposed and despoiled minister, will best be explained by an account of his movements during a single day.

On the twelfth of March, Mourad-Bey rose as usual at about noon, and having been dressed by his valet, smoked several cigarettes before the fire, and partook of a delicate, though rather hasty, breakfast. At precisely three o'clock, he went out in his carriage, which was a very elegant though simple coupé, with two English trotters, a coachman in dark livery, and everything in perfect taste.

Mourad drove first to the Bois-de-Boulogne, and on nearing the lake descended from his carriage and walked around a little, bowing to his acquaintances, and occasionally stopping to converse. At the end of a half hour, he got into the coupé again, and the coachman, without seeming to need any directions, drove straight to the Rue du Ranelagh and entered a courtyard, whose gate was immediately closed behind him. Mourad now ascended the steps of a small house of

Moorish design, and went into the drawing-room. It was here that he had established Fatmah the Circassian, but she was seldom alone, and indeed her position was not very different from that which she had formerly occupied in the harem at Tunis. The brilliant beauty of Mourad's slave-girl, the gorgeousness of her Oriental costume, and the luxury and splendor of her abode, had long ago been noised abroad, and attracted many a curious visitor.

At about five o'clock, Mourad-Bey went to one of the most fashionable clubs of Paris, and as he entered the baccarat-room several persons gathered round him, exclaiming:

"The banker has been obliged to renew the bank three times!"

Just as the new-comer approached the table, the bank was put up at auction, and it was soon sold for two hundred *louis* to a middle-aged man, who was generally known as a very lucky player, though no one thought of doubting his integrity; he never staked, and never took the deal more than once in an evening. He was as fortunate as usual on this occasion, winning repeatedly, until his gains amounted to twenty thousand francs, and then, declaring himself satisfied, he left the house. Soon after this, Mourad also took his departure, going straight to another club, and before he had been there many minutes a tall,

good-looking young man rose with an off-hand air, and took the bank.

"Take care, gentlemen," he said, laughingly; "I am in lucky vein to-day."

"We do not want so much music!" he was answered gaily, and in spite of his boast, he lost three times in succession. He took a new pack of cards, however, shuffled them slowly and carefully under the pretext of changing his luck, and succeeded in changing it so effectually that he rose from the table several thousand francs richer than he had sat down.

"That is enough," he cried, throwing down the cards; "I have earned my dinner!"

"And his supper too!" added one of the victims.

In the third club that Mourad visited, it so happened that he witnessed another victory on the part of an amateur banker, but as it was now seven o'clock he repaired to the dining-room, where he took his seat at a small table near which were several of his friends, the most distinguished members of the club. Having dined sumptuously, he went about nine o'clock to the opera, where he had bought a seat for the season.

As soon as the ballet was over, he left the house, sent his carriage home, and made the rounds of a certain set of clubs as before, and at three in the morning he went into the street

again, called a cab, and directed the driver to take him to a small house in the Avenue de Villiers.

A gaslight was burning in the hall, and Mourad went up the stairs to a comfortable-looking little room, where was spread an excellent supper.

"At last!" said Sivasti, his former secretary, as the ex-minister entered the room, and the two then sat down at the table.

"I could not get here any sooner," returned Mourad, "for Candor did not take the deal until two o'clock, and I wanted to wait, so as to tell you just what he won."

"And what was the amount of his harvest?" asked Sivasti.

"Eighteen thousand, five hundred francs."

"Good! I'll make a note of it—and now let us have supper."

"It looks a very good one—who prepared it?"

"My servant," replied Sivasti; "but you need not be alarmed—he is a married man, and goes home to his family every evening at seven o'clock, so he will never see you."

"That is right," said Mourad, helping himself generously to *pâté-de-foie-gras*; "it would be the height of imprudence to let our mutual relations be suspected, for I should then soon lose my mysterious hold on our agents. They know that they are watched, for you are able to tell them

the amount of their gains to a *louis* every day, but they have no idea who does it. They are advised, directed, controlled, and yet not a man among them would be able to tell the name of the——”

“King of the ‘frauds!’” put in Sivasti.

“I accept the title,” returned the other, raising a glass of champagne to his lips, “for ever since the day Mr. de Canot initiated us into the mysteries of the art of cheating on the steamer, I have been convinced that there alone is my means of replacing the fortune that the Arabs stole from me. I resolved to found a grand anonymous association, to create a State over which I would rule as do constitutional monarchs or certain presidents of republics, without compromising myself, and acting entirely through my ministers.”

“And I represent the ministers,” said Sivasti, getting up from the table and stretching himself on a long divan, with a glass of wine in one hand and a cigar in the other.

“Tell me,” he said, “do you never feel any remorse?”

“No, I do not—why should I? Our religion teaches us to combat infidels on all occasions. Read the Koran.”

“I am willing to take your word for it,” returned the secretary; “and I am quite satisfied if only your scheme does not bring us to ruin.”

"It cannot," said Mourad, firmly; "you know that when we first elaborated it, we provided for every possible catastrophe, and we are succeeding admirably. I have won general esteem and confidence, and have convinced every one that I never play, that I abhor cards; while you have secured the services of those "frauds" that I have pointed out to you, and agreed with them that in return for large advances of cash, they come to you every day, report their winnings, and pay you exactly half. These six men are completely in our power, for they know that they have been detected and will be exposed and ruined if they fail to abide by their contract. At the rate we are going, I shall have recovered my million in two years' time, in spite of my large expenses, and you will have your share."

"And, meanwhile, you have all the roses of life and I have nothing but thorns," said Sivasti.

"Thorns?" repeated his master; "why, you do just as you like! Your duties do not occupy more than two hours a day, while I am obliged to spend a part of each afternoon and all the night in the clubs."

"But no one insults and threatens you!"

"And no one can injure you, Sivasti. What could they prove against you? You never play at cards, besides that, you forget my great influence—I can protect you against every one."

"You are right—say no more. Have you any complaint to make of our agents?"

"Nothing of much importance. You can tell Candor that he must not begin before six o'clock, for I nearly missed him yesterday, and he needs close watching. Audacity took the bank twice yesterday, and that is not safe—he will rouse suspicion. Greediness, I notice, has a nervous way of handling the cards; tell him to be more careful, he had better rest for a day or two and let his nerves grow steady. That is all, I think."

A long pause followed, the two men smoking in silence. At last Sivasti exclaimed, suddenly.

"I know of whom you are thinking."

"I am always thinking of her," returned Mourad. "I care for no one else. The other women I see become just as distasteful to me as were the lazy creatures of my harem in Tunis. I desire only Susanne, with her lovely blue eyes and sunny hair, and her sweet innocent face."

"You want her only because you cannot have her," said Sivasti.

"That does not alter the fact of my being miserable without her."

"Do you see her often?"

"No, only when I go to buy a picture."

"Have you not told me that your painter is infatuated with Fatmah?"

"Yes, and she is entirely unconscious of his feel-

ings toward her. But what does it matter about that?"

"I will explain later. But about George de Bussine; did you not tell me on board the steamer that his hatred of cards looked suspicious? Very well, I have discovered that he was ruined by play, and fled the country with his daughter three years ago. You know the proverb, 'Who has once played, will play again.' Do you not see that you have the means of getting him into your power? That done, you can, if I mistake not, easily win the daughter."

CHAPTER II.

For a long time Susanne had been filled with the gloomiest forebodings concerning her uncle. She could not account for his continued absence, and to her anxious inquiries, Mrs. Petit-homme returned only vague replies.

"He is still travelling, my dear," said the little woman, "and his letters have probably miscarried."

"Where did the last one come from? In his note to me he says that he incloses it in a letter to you—let me see the envelope."

"I can not find it anywhere," returned Cæsarina, "my husband must have torn it up—he generally does the wrong thing, poor Cornelius!"

"But did you not look at the post-mark?"

"Yes, it was an English town—Liverpool, I think."

"I know a gentleman who is in England!" cried the girl. "Mr. Murdon, whom we met in Algeria. I shall write to him at once and ask him to make inquiries. Very likely uncle Lucian is lying ill at some hotel, with no one to take care of him. Oh, how glad I should be to go to him!"

Cæsarina approved of this plan, for it would keep Susanne's thoughts occupied for a time.

Lincoln Murdon was overjoyed at hearing from Susanne, and hastened to comply with her request; but after devoting some time to the search, was forced to inform her that he had met with no success.

Then it occurred to the girl that her uncle's former employer would perhaps know something of his movements; but as Cæsarina hastened to prepare Mr. Robins for the young lady's visit, the latter obtained no new information on the subject so near to her heart. The banker even suggested the possibility of Mr. Lecomte's having gone to the United States of America, but Susanne rejected the idea of his undertaking so long a voyage without informing her.

"The steamers may be delayed," suggested Mr. Robins, and so Susanne waited patiently until

the American mails arrived; and when it became evident that no letter from her uncle had been brought, she began to think that she was being purposely deceived. She asked no more questions of her father or of Cæsarina, and gradually ceased speaking of the missing man to any one.

George de Bussine, who knew what fresh misfortune had befallen his brother, was tortured with sorrow and remorse; nevertheless, he tried to console himself with the assurance that he was not the direct cause of this new accusation, although his own judgment told him that the second disaster was but an outcome of the first. He had, moreover, a solace in his infatuation for Fatmah; the anticipation of seeing her absorbed him so completely that he gradually gave less and less thought to his brother. Two days after the conversation between Mourad and Sivasti had taken place, Fatmah came as usual to the artist's studio, arriving in a closed carriage and wearing her national costume under a large cloak. She replied only by an inclination of the head to his greeting, and walked slowly to her place on a long Turkish divan, where she assumed the prescribed attitude, half reclining among the pillows, and with one bare, shapely arm thrown gracefully over her head.

De Bussine seated himself and took up his brush, while the face of the Circassian gradually acquired the desired expression; her full, red lips parted

slightly, showing the small, white teeth and her splendid eyes, half-closed, fixed their languishing gaze upon the artist. The latter, instead of beginning to work, looked at his model with feverish admiration. The pose and the expression were, he knew, assumed at his own request; but he now imagined that there was meaning in the seductive glance, that those soft, dark eyes were speaking to him as a man, that the mere artist was not considered. Certain it was that the lovely face was strangely agitated, and the bosom heaved tumultuously. De Bussine got up from his chair suddenly, and, going toward his model, took hold of her hand as if to alter its position, and bending over her, whispered hoarsely:

“I adore you!”

She showed no displeasure nor astonishment at his words, but gazed at him in silence, until falling on his knees beside her he exclaimed, wildly:

“I would give the whole world for your love!”

Then, for the first time since she had entered the studio, Fatmah spoke:

“The *whole world*?” she repeated; “that does not mean anything. French people, I know, do not use such figures of speech, though they are common enough in my own country.”

“I would give you anything you wished,” said the artist. “Only tell me what would please you.”

“What I wish,” she said, slowly, “is to leave

Mourad. I wish to live as other women do, to dress as they do, to come and go as I please, instead of remaning his captive, his slave. Secure this new existence for me. Mourad looks upon me merely as a piece of property, for he has bought and paid for me. I belong to my purchaser, it seems, so you have but to purchase me."

Her gaze rested on his face once more, but it was no longer languid and beseeching—it seemed to pierce his soul, and draw him to her forcibly. He forgot his poverty, his inability to do as she suggested, but carried away by his excitement and the delight which her words occasioned, he exclaimed in rapture.

"It shall be as you say. I will deliver you from captivity—you shall be free."

He would have approched her more closely, but she started up from the divan, and standing before him said in her full, rich voice:

"I have been told not to trust the promise of a European. You must give me a proof of your sincerity. You know what my desires are—satisfy them, and I will gladly leave Mourad for ever."

She turned to the door, and when he would have followed her, looked at him with such cold imperiousness that he remained standing as if rooted to the spot. When he was alone he threw himself down on the divan and gave himself up

to thoughts of her, equally intoxicated by the memory of her beauty as he had been by its reality. Up to that moment he had regarded his love as utterly hopeless—he had thought that he could never hope to rival the young, handsome, rich Mourad, but now, Fatmah had met him at least half-way. He had promised to provide the money necessary to free her from her master; but how was he to do this? How was he, a poor painter, to triumph in a contest with Mourad, the millionaire? The little money he had made by the sale of his pictures, did it not belong to his daughter? and at the thought of Susanne there rose in his mind a vision of his injured brother in the prison, and his conscience told him that every franc should go toward paying off that frightful debt. The next instant he seemed to see the form of Fatmah lying on the couch, and the room was filled with the fragrance of Eastern perfumes which recalled her presence.

Ah, if he were but rich!

How could he find a way to make a fortune, he asked himself repeatedly, as he paced up and down the floor distractedly. If he could but try his luck at baccarat! There was the only means he knew of, but he had sworn a solemn oath to play no more. At that thought he turned and left the studio and went in search of his daughter.

He found Susanne with Cæsarina, quietly sew-

ing in the room which had been arranged to look like that in which his wife had died.

It was at the side of that same bed that he had sworn his oath !

"Susanne, my dearest," he said, sitting down beside her, "it is very sad for you to be here. Will you not come out and walk with me this evening? You ought to have some little pleasure; let us go to a concert."

"I can not," she answered sadly; "I can go nowhere until we hear what has become of my dear uncle."

"I was thinking of your health, Susanne," he said; "of course we can enjoy nothing while we are in this terrible suspense. Poor dear brother!"

Susanne fixed her eyes upon the carpet and made no reply, and in a few minutes the father and daughter went down to dinner together. It was a sad, silent meal, and afterwards Susanne and her father sat talking of their life in Algeria, the girl relating many little episodes of their travels, always dwelling longest on those in which Lionel Murdon had figured. At half past nine she bade her father good night, and both went to their rooms, and when Susanne was sleeping soundly and the house was quiet for the night, George de Bussine resolved to go for a walk, in the hope that the cool night air might calm his fevered fancies and enable him to sleep,

In a short time he had reached the city and was sauntering along the boulevard *des Italiens*. Suddenly he found himself in front of the very club-house where he had, three years before, lost his money and his honor. While he was gazing at it curiously, and wondering whether the club still owned the building, some carriages drove up to the door, and a servant in livery drew aside the portieres. If he were to go in, should he be recognized, George wondered, and he crept a little nearer, although he was fully resolved not to enter the house.

CHAPTER III.

“Good evening, Count,” said a voice near him, suddenly. George de Bussine turned in surprise and recognized one of the footmen of the club.

“I am surprised at your knowing me,” said the reformed gambler; “are you still employed here?”

“Yes sir,” replied the man; “the place is not changed much; are you not going in?”

“I have no longer the right, I am afraid, as I am not a member.”

“Oh! that does not matter, sir. You have only to speak to the secretary.”

George de Bussine determined to do as the man suggested—merely as a matter of curiosity, to see how he would be received. Going up to the first

floor, he found himself in front of the desk, where he was recognized by the former secretary.

"I am no longer a member of this club, I suppose," said the artist.

"And why not, Count?" exclaimed the clerk.

"For the simple reason that I have not paid my subscription for nearly four years."

"You have been temporarily absent from the city, and according to our rules you have only to pay the fee for the current year."

At that moment one of the members appeared and greeted De Bussine cordially.

"You are still one of us, my dear Count. Do come in and see your friends."

"But I have given up play," said George, hesitatingly.

"Very well," replied the other; "you have then nothing to fear. Come in and prove to yourself the strength of your resolution."

They went into the reading-room together, and some of the members greeted their former acquaintance as naturally as if they had seen him the day before. In the next room George recognized a number of players who were known as habitual losers. In one corner, sat the man who lost regularly and yet continued to play without complaint; near him, was another man who bewailed his losses loudly, and vowed he would never set foot in the place again; but George had often

heard him say the same thing before. Further on, was the man who had become desperate at losing his all. He was lying back in an armchair, his limbs limp and nerveless, his face pale, his eyes set, his white lips murmuring faintly that suicide was his doom; but, as he had threatened this for the last thirty years, it was thought probable he would die of old age.

The door of the baccarat room stood invitingly open, and after a moment's hesitation George de Bussine entered. To his surprise he found that nothing there had changed; on the walls were the paintings which had looked down upon the same scene for so many years, the mirrors reflected the same faces, the thick window curtains were still discolored with tobacco smoke and impregnated with the odors of numberless cigars; on the mantle-piece was the clock which no one ever dared to look at, lest it should remind him of a neglected duty.

In the middle of the room stood the great baccarat table, but it had been lately re-covered, for the old green cloth had succumbed to the constant friction of coins and counters, to the scraping of the croupier's rake, and the repeated touch of nervous hands. George recognized nearly all his old friends, who, however, were too deeply engrossed to speak to him; but the manager hastened to welcome his former client, and the

next minute reminded him that he had gone away owing eight thousand francs.

"I had quite forgotten it," said de Bussine.

"I knew that," replied the manager; "but I was not alarmed. I was quite content to await your return."

"Thanks," replied the Count; "I will bring you the money to-morrow." It did not occur to him, that his debtor not having known his whereabouts had been obliged to trust him all this time.

As he drew nearer the card table some one touched him on the shoulder, and the voice of Mourad-Bey said, gaily:

"A-ha! so my painter is going to try his hand at baccarat!"

"No, indeed, your excellency; I cannot afford to."

"I should be very happy to supply you with funds," said Mourad.

"No, thank you—I never play."

"You show your wisdom," said the other; and, pointing to the players, he added, "they are all fools."

De Bussine agreed with him, and stood watching the game with quite a superior air, and congratulated himself on feeling no inclination whatever to join the gamblers. Two hours later he returned to his home with a light heart, saying to himself:

"Ah, if my poor brother could but see me now, how he would rejoice!"

The next day he rose early and set to work in his studio, and at four o'clock in the afternoon, while he was still busy, he heard a light knock at the door.

"Come in," he said, without looking up, and Fatmah stood before him.

She came toward him slowly, with her graceful, swinging movement, and as he gazed at her in silent admiration, she said, sadly :

"You did not expect to see me so soon, but I am obliged to leave France in a short time, and I thought you might be grieved if your painting were left unfinished."

"You—leave France! Why—how?" cried the artist in an agitated voice.

"Yes," she replied; Mourad has grown tired of me, and as he finds I am not useful to him he has ordered me to return to Circassia."

"And do you wish to go away?" asked George, struggling with his emotion.

"Alas! no," she answered; "I have no friends there—my kindred are all dead, but it is Mourad's will.

"He cannot exact obedience from you," cried the artist; "while you are in France you are as free as he is; you can defy his tyranny."

"But what would become of me," she said,

"how could I live, I, who have no friend, no protector. You are the only being who has shown me any sympathy, and you are powerless to aid me."

She turned away from him and took her accustomed position on the divan, fixing her voluptuous gaze upon him as before. The artist with great effort controlled his agitation and resumed his work, and after a short time Fatmah proposed that he should finish a picture which he had already begun, in which she represented one of the celebrated dancing-girls of Said.

Going behind a screen, she hastened to change her costume and in a few minutes re-appeared. A sunbeam, as if greeting the beautiful apparition, suddenly flitted across the studio and lighted up the floating, diaphanous drapery, which hardly concealed the perfect outline of her form.

Raising herself lightly on her toes she curved her arms over her head, which was thrown back gracefully, the glorious Oriental eyes half closed, and then, keeping time with a slow, swaying motion of her body, as if about to dance, she sang in a low tone a rhythmical air, which recalled the grand dance of the East as she had often seen it in the harem. After a minute she stood motionless and silent, with her gaze fixed languishingly upon the artist, who could hardly take his eyes off his beauteous model.

At last she declared that she was tired, and left him suddenly, promising to come again the next day. This time George de Bussine found that he was powerless to conquer the emotions which the sight of Fatmah awakened in his heart. He felt that he would make any sacrifice to call her his, and at that moment the loud striking of the clock reminded him that there was but one way to succeed. One of the baccarat players had promised to keep "open bank" that afternoon, and, as he had been in unlucky vein for some time, all the others were anticipating a rich harvest at his expense. George resolved to go and watch the game, although, alas! his oath would prevent his taking part in it. He had promised to pay his debt to the manager of the club, and was therefore bound to go. He took 10,000 francs—just half his savings—and set out.

On reaching the club-house he found that the game had begun, and that the banker, although losing heavily, continued to play. De Bussine stood watching the game, staking mentally, and saying to himself, "I have won—I have won again."

While he was enjoying this ingenuous pleasure, Mourad joined him, smiling as before, and begging him to come and talk with him in a quiet corner.

The conversation turned entirely on the subject of Fatmah, whom Mourad represented as the

pearl of womankind, incomparably superior to all others, not in beauty of face and form alone, but in qualities of mind and heart, and above all in tenderness, in depth of affection, and strength of devotion. He added that he was so afraid of losing her love, that he had resolved to send her away from Paris for a while, and therefore must request the artist to finish the pictures as quickly as possible.

After some hesitation de Bussine ventured to suggest that he wondered at Mourad's jealousy not being aroused by the precious Fatmah's frequent *tete-a-tetes* with himself, and at these words the Tunisian looked at the speaker in undisguised amazement. Then, after a long pause, he said slowly, and with profuse apologies, that he had always pictured a possible rival as a younger and handsomer man, in short, a very different sort of person to the one before him. He seemed unable to repress a sneer of contempt and defiance as he spoke, although his meaning was expressed good-naturedly, and the artist, remembering Fatmah's soft glances and appealing smiles, felt his blood boil with indignation and wounded vanity.

What a delight it would be to triumph over this conceited, insolent young fellow! To show him that Fatmah appreciated the superior worth of the poor and humble artist!

All he needed was money, and the ten thousand

francs in crisp banknotes seemed to burn the fingers that were grasping them. If he could but throw them down on the table, and win a fortune! Mourad, who had left him for a minute to speak to another acquaintance, now rejoined him, and continued to talk to him of Fatmah:

"She has always brought me good luck," he said; "and in her absence I shall have the pictures, which you will kindly finish for me. They will serve as talismans, just as this ring does," and he showed the artist a curiously engraved ring. "Those characters are Arabic," he continued, "and signify, '*I bring luck to those who believe in me.*' "

"Oh, give it to me!" cried George, but the other answered:

"I cannot give away Fatmah's ring; but I will lend it to you, if you would like to use it to stake with."

At that moment two players left the table, their hands full of banknotes, and one of them, seeing George, exclaimed:

"Just look here! You are mad to lose such a chance. The banker persists in playing, though he loses every time!"

Mourad thrust the magic ring into the artist's trembling hand as the banker cried, "Stakes, gentlemen!" and George de Bussine, rushing to the table, laid down the ring, exclaiming:

"Two hundred *louis* on this!"

He was successful three times in succession, realizing in all the sum of twenty-eight thousand francs.

"Fatmah brings you luck!" said Mourad's voice in his ear; "keep the ring for a week, if you like."

It was nearly eleven o'clock before the banker showed any sign of recovering his losses, and then only did de Bussine leave the table. He had now more than eighty thousand francs, and said to himself that if this good fortune lasted long, he would soon be able to teach the self-complacent Oriental a lesson. He told himself, also, that it was not the ring that made him win, but his own prudence in staking, his increased experience, and unwonted calmness and reflection. The mania for play took complete possession of him, and if the recollection of his oath arose in his mind, the thought of Fatmah drove it out before he had time to dwell upon it.

Day after day he appeared at the card-table and, continuing to win, was complimented on his skill by Mourad, the tempter, who was ever at his elbow. On the other hand, Fatmah came to the studio each morning, posing in the same ravishing costume, and maddening him with her melting eyes.

When he told her of his brilliant prospects, she

only sighed and said that the time of her departure was fast drawing near, and to his entreaties that she leave Mourad at once, she answered firmly that in her country, although a man was expected to have many wives, no woman could have more than one master.

CHAPTER IV.

ONE afternoon, soon after Mr. de Bussine had gone to the club, Mrs. Petit-homme rose from her work at Susanne's side, and said:

"I must go, my dear; Mr. Petit-homme made me promise to be in time for dinner."

"Very well," said the girl, quietly.

"And I am afraid that I shall not be able to come to you to-morrow. I have to go to several places, to consult my agent about investments—you understand——"

"I understand perfectly," answered Susanne, without looking up, "that you cannot be here and at Melun at the same time."

"What do you mean?" asked the other.

"I mean that there is to be a very interesting case tried at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning, and that you wish to be present as you are a devoted friend of the accused."

"What—who are you speaking of?"

“Of one Lucian Lecomte, a prisoner at Melun, who is to be tried for stealing ten thousand francs,” replied Susanne with great calmness; and she drew from under the materials in her work-basket a newspaper paragraph, which proved to be a notice of the approaching trial.

Mrs. Petit-homme read it in dismay. It closed with these words:

“This Lucian Lecomte is the same person who was convicted three and a half years ago of embezzlement and breach of trust, while in the employ of Messrs. Robins & Co., the well-known bankers of the boulevard Haussmann.”

When Mrs. Petit-homme had read the paragraph, Susanne said:

“You see, I know all. Do not try to deceive me any longer. Did you think that I had forgotten my dear uncle? Did you think that I could be content when you kept on saying, ‘he will come—wait a little longer.’? Ah, I never once ceased to think of him, to long for him, and at last I was sure that there was something kept from me. I did not know where to turn for help, until at last it occurred to me that newspapers contained everything; and then, although you had already refused to bring me any, saying that newspapers were not proper reading for a young girl, I determined to have them, and I bribed the servant to buy some every day. For a long time I found no men-

tion of my lost uncle; but at last, when I was almost in despair, I saw this paragraph.

"I knew there could be no mistake! It is my uncle, my darling father Lucian, whom they have put in prison—my dear uncle—a thief!"

"He is not guilty!" cried Cæsarina.

"Oh you need not tell me that! I knew at once there was some mistake, some horrible mystery. I went down to the newspaper office in a cab, with the servant, and saw a full account of my uncle's trial nearly four years ago. Then I understood the meaning of your strange looks—I knew it all—all—I remembered my mother's death—I I saw how my uncle had sacrificed himself for us."

Cæsarina clasped the weeping girl in her arms. When she had again grown calm Susanne said, "I will go with you to the trial. It will give him courage to know that I am there."

"It will distress him to know that all his efforts to keep the matter a secret from you have been useless."

"But I shall go to see him in his prison. I shall console him and thank him for all his devotion. He will see that I do not doubt him, that I have not ceased to love him. I am determined, Cæsarina, to go with you."

"Well, my dear, it shall be as you say; but I must prepare him for your visit, and you must

tell your father that you will be away from home all day."

"Do not leave me to-night," said Susanne, entreatingly. "My father will not come home, and I have no friend but you. Let us talk of uncle Lucian; tell me everything you know about this terrible affair." So Mrs. Petit-homme stayed with the young girl, and the next morning at eight o'clock they set out together for Melun.

"Does your father know that this is the day of the trial?" asked Cæsarina.

"I cannot say," replied Susanne; "I lay awake last night waiting to tell him, but he did not come home at all."

"Has he begun to play again?" asked Mrs. Petit-homme.

"I do not know, but I still hope that he has not broken his vow."

All the way to Melun, Susanne talked of nothing but her uncle's case, and his chances of acquittal. She had learned every detail from Mrs. Petit-homme and reflected calmly on the probable results. She did not weep nor tremble, but was so alert and resolute that her friend wondered at her presence of mind and fortitude.

"My uncle is not trembling," said the girl, "he is thinking of his defense, and of how he will silence his calumniators. Ah, I wish I had known in time, I would have engaged a great, clever law-

yer who would have proved my uncle's innocence to the world, not only of this crime, but of the other also!"

When they reached Melun they drove straight to the court-house, where Cornelius was waiting them.

He told them that Mr. Lecomte's case was not to be opened until the afternoon.

"Where is he now?" asked Susanne.

"He is in the city jail, Miss."

"And where is that?"

"Close by," replied Cornelius, pointing to the building.

Susanne told the coachman to drive on a little, and then, when they were directly opposite the prison, she put her face close to the carriage window and looked up at the dark, cold walls and iron gratings which alone separated her from her beloved uncle—her more than father. He was there, only a few steps from her, and yet she could not speak to him, she could not tell him how she was suffering with him, and how much she loved him! She looked at the prison wistfully with dry, tearless eyes, but with bitter tears in her heart. Then, suddenly, she turned around, exclaiming, "Why should I not see him now?"

"Why? Oh, because, my dear——"

"I know what you mean; I know you think that the sight of me would disturb and excite him

too much, and unfit him for the strain of his trial. I think just the contrary, however; I know that when the first shock is over he will be more calm and more firm than before. In the first trial he did not try to assert his innocence, but when he knows that I am there, looking at and listening to him, he will rouse himself and prove to me, at least, that he is innocent. And then, suppose that he is convicted! Imagine him going back to his living tomb, thinking that it will be five years more, perhaps ten, before he shall see his darling niece—for he is thinking of me, always of me, as I think of none but him. I will not have it so—he shall see me first; he shall know that I believe in him, that I love him, as he loves me! I am determined to go into the prison.”

“You will have to get permission first.”

“From whom?”

“From the Prefect, I suppose; or stay, I have an idea!” cried Cornelius.

“Another idea?” exclaimed his wife, in astonishment.

“The superintendent of the prison at Melun has the necessary authority, and there he stands at the gate. He has evidently come to attend the trial.”

“I will go and speak to him,” said Susanne, getting out of the carriage, followed by Cæsarina.

In a few minutes Mr. Boulard had shown them

into the little room which served as the parlor of the building, and Susanne de Bussine had tendered her request.

Her hearer looked at her with the greatest interest, which was increased when he heard that the person she wished to see was no other than his protégé, Lucian Lecomte.

"You ought to have a permit, signed by the Prefect," he said, doubtfully.

But Susanne replied:

"There is not time to get it now—you will grant me permission, I am sure," and, after a little soft persuasion from her, the superintendent began to show signs of giving in.

"It is such a simple matter," she said; "and you are surely not afraid to let me see him. What harm do you suppose I could do—even if I wished to do any? Let me speak with him for a few minutes, that is all I ask—pray, pray, do not refuse me. You can be present all the time if you wish—only let me see him."

Mr. Boulard could resist no longer, but went at once and gave the necessary orders.

CHAPTER V.

LUCIAN LECOMTE was surprised at hearing his name called, and as he silently followed the guard

to the lobby he wondered who could be waiting to see him.

"Probably my lawyer," he thought; but at that moment he caught sight of Cæsarina, who was looking through a grating into the corridor.

"Ah, the good woman has secured a permit, and come to talk to me of Susanne," he thought, with a sigh.

As soon as he reached her, Mrs. Petit-homme took both his hands, saying:

"I have come to prepare you for something—be strong."

"I can bear anything," he answered. "Tell me the worst at once."

"You can bear sorrow, I know, but this is a
oy——"

j "Joy!" he echoed, then suddenly turned pale, and looked at her fixedly.

"Some one has come to see you," said Cæsarina. "Look!"

Lucian turned toward the iron gate which was being slowly opened, and the next minute Susanne appeared. He glanced at her, then lowered his eyes as if disbelieving them, and as she came swiftly toward him, he uttered a low cry, and tottered as if about to fall. But Susanne sprang forward, and after throwing her arms around his neck, as she had thrown them in her childhood,

took his face between her hands and covered it with kisses.

Neither spoke, and the man closed his eyes and gave himself up to an ecstasy of joy. Suddenly, however, he raised his head, clasped his hands over hers, and looked long and lovingly into her fair young face. Then he pressed a kiss upon her forehead, and his eyes filled with happy tears.

Mr. Boulard and Cæsarina stood watching the two from a short distance, and the superintendent, as much moved as his companion, said to her in a low voice :

“I know I can trust your word that it is perfectly safe for me to leave those two alone for a few minutes.”

“Perfectly,” she answered ; and after saying a few words to the guards, he invited Susanne and Lecomte into a small room off the corridor, where they could be quite alone.

“Thank you, sir,” said Susanne, quietly ; and, taking her uncle’s arm, she walked with him into the room indicated. Lucian took his niece to the window, and looked at her eagerly.

“Yes, it is indeed you, my little Susanne,” he said at last. “Your features have not changed much, but how tall and willowy you have grown ! Your eyes are just as soft and blue as your dear mother’s were, but there is more determination in your face. Your smile is exactly like hers, and

your hair is still blonde, as I had hoped it would be. It has grown a trifle more golden, however. And why do you not brush it back a little? Your forehead can hardly be seen!"

"That is the fashion," she said, smiling; and at that word, which he had not heard for years, he recollected his position, and the thought of his prison costume flashed through his mind. He stepped back hastily and covered his face with his hands; but Susanne took hold of them gently, and said, in a full, clear voice, as if she wanted every one to hear her:

"I do not care for your clothes! I do not see them! You have no reason to be ashamed of them, since you wear them undeservedly! Do you think I do not know!"

"What do you know?" he asked, anxiously.

"I know that you do not deserve to be here. I know that you are innocent. Some one robbed your safe, and you are being punished for his crime!"

"Whose crime?" he asked, looking at her searchingly.

"I do not know that," she answered; "but you do. You did not try to defend yourself, but submitted to the punishment to shield another. I have read every word of the reports of your trial."

"Who gave them you—who told you? Was it Mrs. Petit-homme?"

"No, she would tell me nothing, and I thought you must be dead. I was never so unhappy in my life. But at last I got some newspapers, and found out everything."

Lucian looked into her eyes and, after a pause, asked:

"How is your father? You have not spoken of him."

"He is well, but miserable about you. I knew it would not do for him to come here with me; he would have unnerved you."

"Does he work?"

"Yes, all day long, and he has sold nearly all his pictures. We are growing quite rich. In the evening we sit together and talk."

Lucian's face beamed as she spoke, and he said to himself that his self-sacrifice had produced good fruit.

The girl, fearful of being questioned further about her father, went on talking:

"About your trial, uncle. You will defend yourself vigorously, will you not? Remember, I shall be there!"

"You?" he cried.

"Certainly, that is what I came to Mélnun for. I did not know that I should be permitted to see you, but I am so glad they let me in. Are not

you glad, uncle Lucian—do you not want to kiss your little girl again ?”

He caught her in his arms, pressed her closely to his heart, and kissed her fresh, fair face repeatedly ; and then Susanne grew serious again and talked about the approaching trial, until Mrs. Petit-homme appeared and announced that the time had come for them to part.

CHAPTER VI.

THE act of accusation being read, the prisoner stood up to answer the questions of the president of the court. The sight of Lucian Lecomte in the prison garb and surrounded by guards produced a great sensation among the audience, though of course none were so painfully affected as Susanne and Cæsarina. They listened breathlessly when he loudly asserted his innocence, and expressed his conviction that his two enemies, Brazier and Sagot, had conspired to injure him by putting the note-book into his office-table. Unfortunatly, the former notary was an adept in the art of deceiving, and assuming an air of greatest simplicity and moderation, he denied everything the accused had said, and declared him to be a thorough hypocrite. The other convicts on being summoned to testify, endorsed what their leader said

having been well drilled by him for that purpose. Sagot, in reply to Lecomte's accusation, replied that he would not have been so foolish as to put the money into the accountant's table, but would have kept it in some safer place where no one could have found it.

Cornelius Petit-homme did his best to save the accused, but the unexpected sound of a little squeaking voice issuing from such an enormous frame, aroused the risibilities of every one present, and went far towards nullifying the effect of his words. Moreover, it was perfectly apparent that the man was repeating what some other person had told him, and indeed Cæsarina had thought it necessary to make him learn his deposition by heart. Altogether, appearances were so much against Lecomte that even the favorable testimony of Mr. Boulard, the superintendent of the prison, did not make much impression upon his hearers. Susanne listened to the depositions and other speeches with a wildly beating heart, and when at last the jury went out to deliberate, she could hardly control her agitation, until Mrs. Petit-homme clasped her arms soothingly around the trembling girl. Suddenly a bell rang and the jury returned. In the midst of a death-like silence the chief, putting his hand upon his heart declared, upon his honor and his conscience, that it was the

opinion of the majority of the jurors that the accused was GUILTY.

Lecomte was then brought in to hear his sentence, and when asked if he had anything to say, answered that he had not, then looking up, fixed his eyes upon Susanne.

The president now rose and declared him sentenced to five year's imprisonment, and five years more of strict surveillance. The guards approached to lead the condemned man away, but before he left the court-room, Lecomte bowed his head and smiled farewell to his niece.

A few minutes later, Susanne with Cæsarina and Cornelius were on the way back to Paris. The girl sat at the open window of the railway-carriage in perfect silence, and with a thousand thoughts running riot through her brain, she made so many different plans that she could decide on none, and her two friends looked at her in alarm, fearing that the great strain and excitement of the day would be too much for her. She allowed herself to be put to bed, however, without a word, Cæsarina lay down on a sofa near her, and the next morning the girl awoke at nine o'clock, and lay thinking for some time in silence. Then, having come at last to a decision, she rose and dressed hastily, and sitting down at a table, wrote a telegraphic message. "I rely on your friend-

ship for a very great service. Come. Susanne de Bussine."

Mrs. Petit-homme came into the room just as the message was written.

"Will you take this to the telegraph-office at once?" said Susanne, "and then come back to me?"

Cæsarina gladly assented, and went out immediately with the despatch. It was addressed to *Mr. Lionel Murdon, care Lord Murdon, Piccadilly, London.*

When Mrs. Petit-homme returned, she was astonished to find Susanne calm and composed.

"Tell me," said the girl, "where will they send my uncle now?"

"To Poissy, I suppose, but he will first have to complete the term of his original sentence at Melun."

"That would make seven-years and a half altogether," said Susanne, musingly, and then added, "I must go and speak to my father."

She went down to his studio, and receiving no reply to her knock, entered the room. The artist was asleep on a sofa, but he started up with a guilty air as she approached him and exclaimed:

"My dear child, where did you go yesterday? The servant told me that Mrs. Petit-homme took you away with her."

"Yes, we went to Melun," said Susanne, quietly,

and in reply to his look of alarmed enquiry she continued, "we went to attend the trial of a prisoner—my uncle Lucian Lecomte."

"Oh, Susanne," he cried, trembling visibly, "you know then?"

"Yes," she said firmly; "I know all. I was present at the trial, and was allowed to visit him in the jail."

"But he is not convicted again?" cried George de Bussine.

His daughter looked at him in silence for a moment, and then answered slowly:

"He is condemned to five years more of imprisonment, and these will make nearly eight years altogether," and after a slight pause she added: "Do you intend to allow this, papa?"

"No," he cried, "I will prevent it, I will go at once."

"You cannot do that now," she interrupted, "it is too late; we must help him in another way. I am going to try every means to obtain his pardon. Could you not get some assistance from that Mourad-Bey whom we met on the steamer on our way from Algeria?"

"Yes, he often comes here to buy my pictures," said de Bussine.

"I am sure he could do something, for he knows all the ministers and influential yersons. Ask him to come and see me."

"You are going to tell him?" began her father in an anxious voice—but she reassured him, saying:

"Do not fear. I shall not tell him that the prisoner is your brother. Uncle Lucian has persisted in concealing your relationship, and I am bound to respect his wishes. I am sorry to have interrupted your nap, papa, and all I ask you to do is to bring your influential friend to see me."

She turned away from him without another word, and he stood as if transfixed by her cold commanding manner. As soon as she had left the room, he dropped into an arm chair, looking about him with a half dazed air, and said feebly:

"My poor brother—condemned again—three hundred thousand francs lost in two nights. I have lost Fatmah—everything is gone!"

Meanwhile Susanne had returned to Mrs. Petit-homme.

"I may rely on you and on your good husband? Will he have the courage to return to Melun for a little while?"

"Yes indeed," replied the woman. "He has already learned that the person who succeeded him does not like the place and has decided to give it up."

"That is settled, then," said the girl, throwing her arms round Cæsarina's neck.

CHAPTER VII.

MOURAD was astonished but delighted to hear that Miss de Bussine wished to see him. He had not met her for nearly six months, in spite of the frequent visits he made to her father's studio, in the hope of seeing her. It was agreed that he should call at three o'clock in the afternoon, but he did not appear until six. He had hoped that her father would then be away from home, and was much disappointed to find Mrs. Petit-homme sitting with the young lady. After the usual greetings, Susanne explained that she had sent for him for the purpose of asking him to do her a great service.

"I am entirely at your disposal," he said, bowing low; and when he heard that she wished him to use his influence to obtain the release from prison of a person who had been for years a devoted friend of her family, he assured her that he would use his utmost efforts to serve her.

"You will find it a difficult task, I fear," she said, sadly. "The laws and customs of this country are so different from those of Tunis."

"Ah! Miss de Bussine," he replied, "if I were Prime minister here, I would willingly open every prison to win one smile from you!"

Her long sojourn in Algeria had accustomed

Susanne to the exaggerated compliments of the Orientals, and without noticing his last words, she proceeded to give him a detailed account of the matter in question. He then took his leave, promising her that he would report at the earliest possible moment, and pressing to his lips the hand which she extended. Just as he was going out of the front door, a cab drove up and a young man stepped out, and rang the bell. It was Lionel Murdon. When Cæsarina led him into the drawing room he hesitated a moment on seeing Susanne, who at once came toward him and held out her hand saying, "Thank you for coming so soon."

"I was just starting for Ireland with my father and brother when your despatch arrived, but I took the first train to Dover, and here I am."

"Was not your father displeased at your leaving him?" asked the girl in a troubled voice.

"Why no, he was the first one to say, set off at once."

"Have you told them about me?"

"I have talked of no one but you since I reached home, and my father takes the greatest interest in you. If you will but say the word, he will come here to tell you so. He will tell you that he has always longed for a French daughter-in-law." Susanne saw that Lionel Murdon had not changed. He spoke his mind just as frankly, and as decidedly as he has always done. She looked at him for a

few moments in silence, and then with a great effort she said slowly:

"When I sent for you I half feared that it would be thus—that you would return with the same hopes and sentiments as you have so often expressed. I am afraid it is ungenerous in me to recall those hopes, for they can never be realized. New obstacles have arisen since we parted."

"What do you mean?" he said; and she answered: "You will understand that when I have explained the nature of the service that I ask of your brotherly devotion."

"Your brother is awaiting your orders," he said gloomingly.

CHAPTER VIII.

SIDI-BOU-SAÏD, who was no other than Sivasti, minister-in-chief to the king of the card sharpers' was giving audience to his agents in his apartment in the Avenue de Villiers. They came one by one according to appointment, and paid in half their winnings of the previous night, after which Sivasti took occasion to rebuke such as had disobeyed his orders by winning too often or otherwise inviting suspicion. The last person to appear on the scene was a tall, thin, middle-aged man of a gentleman-

like appearance, but with a rather nervous manner. When their accounts had been settled, Sivasti said to his visitor :

“Well, Mesereau, are you still of the same mind as you were yesterday?”

“Yes,” said the other, “and if you will permit, I will explain the matter to you.”

His listener motioned him to a chair, and when they were both seated, Mesereau went on: “I believe I was born with the passion for play, for at twenty-five years of age I had wasted my dead father’s fortune and reduced my widowed mother to utter poverty; however, I was soon married to the best and gentlest woman in the world, and my lucky vein returning to me suddenly, I was able to provide for her and my children. It was only when Fortune turned away from me again, and I saw them threatened with starvation, that I began to cheat at the card table. Repeated practices soon made me an expert, and I made enough money to give my wife a comfortable home and my daughter a dowry. My whole ambition then was to renounce play entirely and live at peace in the bosom of my family. Unfortunately for me you crossed my path; you accused me of trickery and threatened to expose me unless I agreed to share my gains with you. I consented because I knew that it would kill my wife to discover that I had been such a knave, for she has

never doubted my honesty. My exposure would bring disgrace on my whole family and I should lose their affection forever."

He paused and his listener observed calmly:

"I have no intention of ruining you all the while you keep to your contract."

"That is just what I do not wish to do," returned the other; "I have conceived a horror and detestation of my profession. I wish to give it up now and forever and devote my time to some honest occupation."

"I will not prevent your doing that," said Sivasti, drily, "but I have a condition to make."

"What is it?" said Mesereau in an anxious tone.

"Simply this, you must find a substitute, and instruct him thoroughly in your art, before you sever your connection with me."

"I cannot do it," said the other hastily.

"Then I cannot release you from your contract."

The two men argued the matter hotly for several minutes, Mesereau declaring that he did not know any eligible man, and Sivasti maintaining that the nameless person who was their master, had positively refused to accept his resignation on any other terms. Then Mesereau in despair recollected that one of the greatest losers in his club was the Count de Bussine.

"De Bussine?" repeated Sivasti, thoughtfully; "I have never heard the name, is he a likely person?"

"He is a bold player and has lost large sums lately."

"Very well, set about it at once. Do your best to secure him, but proceed very cautiously."

His listener looked up quickly, saying:

"Why are you so anxious to ruin this man?"

And Sivasti, surprised at the suddenness of the question, hesitated a moment and then said:

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean," said Mesereau, firmly, "that you are not as frank as I am—why did you not tell me at first that our employer has some object for making a philosopher of the Count de Bussine? Suppose I refuse your proposal?"

"Then you will have to continue in your present situation; if, on the contrary, you accept it, you will soon be free to live as you please and my authority will be at an end. I give you my word of honor."

"Is that the only guaranty?" asked Mesereau.

"I can offer you no better," said Sivasti. And the other man exclaimed, "it is not enough!"

"Sir, do you mean to insult me? be careful!"

"Is that a threat? I am accustomed to both sword and pistol."

Sivasti laughed and said carelessly:

"We understand each other, that is evident, think the matter over and let me know your decision."

And so saying, he rose from his chair and bowed his visitor out of the room.

Mesereau lost no time in calling at the studio of George de Bussine. The unfortunate artist had lost not only all his savings at baccarat but also the money borrowed from Mourad-Bey and other persons. He was on the very brink of despair, and was pacing the floor distractedly when a visitor was announced. The latter did not have much difficulty in leading the conversation to the subject of baccarat and confided to de Bussine that the latter had in all probability been swindled by the sharpers.

"You cannot imagine," he said "how clever those fellows are; one of them once taught me several of his tricks, and by practice I became quite an expert."

"You," cried George, looking at him suspiciously.

"And why not?" returned the other, "should I not have the right to take my own? For ten years they had been robbing me, and at last I had the means of revenging myself. Give me a pack of cards, and I will show you some of their devices."

"But how could any one have cheated me when I was the banker?" asked de Bussine.

"By merely slipping some false cards into your pack before you began to deal! Sit down by me, and I will give you some lessons."

CHAPTER IX.

MOURAD was too anxious to please Miss de Bussine to neglect any means of obtaining the release of her friend the prisoner. The day after his interview with her he called upon several influential men. They all received him with the greatest cordiality and declared themselves willing and anxious to serve him, but at the same time they could not conceal from him that there was not the slightest possibility of his request being granted. If it had been merely a question of remitting a part of the penalty of a common criminal, a petition might be signed by the minister, but the man Lecomte had committed a second offence before the term of imprisonment for the first had expired. Mourad was so little impressed by the justice of the answers he received, and so little conversant with the usages of his adopted country, that he tried to have recourse to bribery to gain his point, and was simply astonished to find that the

French officials were incorruptible. The Tunisian was therefore obliged to resign himself to failure, and hastened to report it to Susanne. It happened that George de Bussine and Cæsarina were both absent when he called, but the young girl being all impatience to learn what he had done, received him alone in her drawing-room. When he had acquainted her with the fruitlessness of his earnest endeavors, she did not seem to be much surprised or disappointed, but smiling sadly said:

"I had not very much hope of success, but I felt bound to leave no stone unturned. Believe me, sir, I am sincerely grateful for the trouble you have taken, and I thank you with all my heart."

As she spoke she artlessly held out both her hands to him, the more warmly to express her gratitude. He took her hands in his, and to her amazement held them firmly, saying:

"You do not know how happy it makes me to hold your hands in mine—you are so beautiful and I love you so tenderly."

"Oh, sir," she cried in dismay, "you must not address me in such terms; remember that I hardly know you."

"You must learn to know me," he said in a low voice; "for I have never ceased to think of you and to long for you since the day we first met. My heart is yours entirely."

"I beg you to be silent," she interrupted, look-

ing into his face, "I insist on your releasing my hands. I held them out to you in all sincerity and confidence, believing you to be an honorable gentleman."

"No," he cried, "I will not obey you, for you look lovelier than ever in your anger—I adore you."

"I will not listen—let me go—I insist—I entreat—I will call for help!"

"It is of no use," he answered, trying to draw her towards him.

She struggled to free herself and called loudly for assistance. Suddenly a slow heavy step was heard on the stairs and Mourad hastily drew back; the next minute Cornelius Petit-homme entered the room. Susanne pointed to Mourad, saying:

"Turn this person out of the house—he has insulted me."

The giant made no reply, but seizing the visitor by the collar with one hand put him forcibly out of the room and down the stairs, in spite of his resistance. A few minutes after Cæsarina made her appearance, and Susanne, still trembling, related all that had occurred. Cæsarina was loudly expressing her indignation at the conduct of Mourad, when Lionel Murdon was announced.

"Not a word of this to him," said Susanne, "we have more important matters to talk about."

And as he entered the room she exclaimed:

"Have you any news?"

"No," he replied, "the secretary of the English legation has been interesting himself in the matter, but has been unsuccessful."

"Then," said the girl, "my last hope disappears; we must arrange our great plan. Have you decided to join us, Mr. Lionel?"

"Certainly," he replied, "I am entirely at your service."

"And you, my good friend," she said turning to Cæsarina, "have you reflected on the grave risks you take in helping us?"

"I have thought of everything," said the woman, "and fear nothing."

Susanne then looked enquiringly towards Cornelius, and he said slowly:

"I will do whatever my wife tells me."

"Thanks," said Susanne, "and now for our plan."

Meanwhile Mourad had hastened to his confidant Sivasti.

"I have done as you desired," said the latter; "Mesereau and de Bussine are becoming great friends. If Fatmah plays her part properly all will be well."

He sent a cloud of cigar-smoke into air, and after a pause, remarked slowly:

"The Circassians are known to be revengeful.

Take my advice—beware of women, particularly Fatmah!”

PART FOURTH.

CHAPTER I.

ON his return to the prison, Lucian Lecomte entreated the superintendent to put him into a cell instead of obliging him to mingle with the other men in the workrooms. Mr. Boulard was unable to grant this request, but understanding how painful it would be for Lecomte to associate with the other prisoners after all that had occurred, he promised to find some work for him which would keep him away from them during the day at least. Accordingly, he was given charge of the pumps by which water was raised to the great reservoirs on the roof of the building; his only companion was a young soldier who was condemned to five years imprisonment for drawing his sword on a policeman during a drunken brawl. Lucian Lecomte and young Armand took turns at working the pumps, and as they were not very strictly watched, often found opportunities for exchanging a few words; but their great-

est pleasure was to go up to the roof of the building to find out whether the reservoirs were full. From this height they could see the winding course of the patrol, and a little court-yard on the other side of the wall; farther on was the end of the island on which the prison buildings stood, the two branches of the river Seine, and its opposite banks. Lucian had not seen such an extended view for nearly four years, and the sight of the glistening water and verdant foliage made him almost forget his sorrow for the moment. When night came, however, he was obliged to leave his quiet corner and go into the dormitory to sleep. Here he was elbowed roughly and looked at askance by his former comrades, who took delight in subjecting him to every possible annoyance.

The ringleaders, Brazier and Sagot, had become the best possible friends, the latter being well supplied with tobacco and having in prospect the promised reward of his successful trickery with the supervisor's notebook.

It happened, fortunately for Lecomte, however, that a former schoolmaster, who had already spent five years in the prison, again became an inmate. He was a man of no principle, and of violent temperament, and was given to forming close friendships among his fellow-prisoners. Sagot, the cabinet maker, had been a protege and satellite of Clopied's, and the latter was consumed

with jealousy to find that Sagot had attached himself to Brazier. He made two or three attempts to regain his former follower, but both Sagot and Brazier had nearly completed their term and the former would not run any risk of losing the promised five thousand francs. He therefore turned a deaf ear to all Clopied's persuasions and threats, and the ex-schoolmaster, in revenge, set up as the protector of Lecomte; he was joined by some of the other men, and thus Lucian profited by the quarrel of Sagot and Clopied.

About a month after Lecomte's second conviction, the whole dormitory was aroused suddenly in the middle of the night, by hearing loud cries for help. The sounds proceeded from Sagot's bed, and Clopied was seen standing over the little cabinetmaker with a long sharp knife in his hand. Several of the men started up and rushed toward him, but before any one could reach him, he had plunged the knife twice into Sagot's heart; he then turned furiously toward Brazier, but Lucian Lecomte barred his passage.

"Let me pass, let me pass!" cried Clopied, "I am going to kill your enemy!"

"I have no enemy," returned the other, holding him back, and at that moment the guards rushed in and secured the assassin.

Brazier was cowering, pale and trembling, in a

corner, and Sagot breathed his last just as the murderer exclaimed triumphantly that he had had his revenge. The latter was led away and locked in a cell, the corpse and all traces of the murder removed, and then the other prisoners returned to their narrow beds and were soon sleeping soundly.

This tragic occurrence had the effect of producing a revulsion of feeling in favor of Lecomte, for the other men fully appreciated his conduct towards the assassin.

"He showed pluck," said one.

"He saved Brazier's neck—he's game," said another, and from that time they all tried to show their approval of him in various ways, so that his existence became less insupportable.

Two weeks after this, Cornelins Petit-homme returned to his former position as supervisor of the workrooms, and Lucian Lecomte had the pleasure of receiving loving messages from Susanne.

One day Cornelius took occasion to come into the pump-room, and after looking about him cautiously, whispered to Lecomte:

"Susanne is making plans for your escape."

"What!" cried the other, "my escape? She must not do it—she must not think of such a thing. She runs the risk of being imprisoned herself—tell her I will not have it. Neither she,

nor you, nor any one shall take such a risk for me."

"You make a mistake—there is no risk," said Mr. Petit-homme, and then he began speaking hurriedly, lest he should not have time to deliver all his message:

"No risk—fine plan," he continued, "study all this part of the building—know it thoroughly—when time comes, go up to the reservoirs—climb up ladders left by workmen—take hold of old telegraph pole, tie the five wires together and slide down to the roundsman's path—jump into the court-yard at the end of the island—open gate—and go to the river bank—boat waiting—you are safe!"

Lucian Lecomte could not help listening eagerly to these hasty explanations—perhaps indeed the thought of escape had occurred to him while he was standing in the free air on the roof. But he would not allow his hopes to rise too much, and after a few minutes of reflection he said:

"Petit-homme, you have forgotten an important detail of your scheme. That little court-yard is guarded by soldiers."

"Military guard to be removed to-morrow," returned Cornelius, "superintendent thinks unnecessary—news certain."

"But there is a sentinel in every one of those brick towers."

"Only at night—during day one guard for that part of house—he will absent at right time."

Lecomte was undecided for a few moments, but then he looked up and said firmly :

"It is useless, I thank you for the trouble you have taken but I will not try to escape—it is only a guilty man who runs away."

"You will not do it?"

"No, I cannot—I am decided."

"Then I have more to tell you. Mrs. Petit-homme expected your refusal and she told me what to say to move you. Wait a moment while I recall her words."

He paused for a minute and then, like a child reciting a lesson, repeated his wife's message :

"Miss Susanne is not at all well. She thinks and talks about nothing but you. Her whole mind is set on effecting your escape, and she is kept up only by the hope of seeing you at liberty. If I tell her that it cannot be done, that you will not attempt it, she will break down completely and have a fever—she will probably die. You have no right to refuse."

Lucian Lecomte looked at the speaker fixedly and then said :

"That is what your wife bade you say, but what is your own opinion? Does not Mrs. Petit-homme exaggerate a little—is my niece actually in danger? Answer me truly, like a man."

"Cæsarina is right—Miss Susanne is nervous—only one thought in her mind."

"Cannot her father soothe her?"

Cornelius looked down in dismay, and when the other repeated the question anxiously, the man replied:

"Cæsarina said nothing about your brother."

"But you can tell me on your own account," cried Lucian, "speak—what of him!"

With the greatest hesitation Cornelius answered:

"We never see him—he spends the day in his studio, and goes out every night."

"Oh, the wretched man!" said Lucian, "he has taken to gambling again. Susanne is alone—she has no protector," and after a short pause he added quickly:

"I will try to escape—have everything prepared."

CHAPTER II.

GEORGE DE BUSSINE was not told of the plans that were being made for his brother's escape. He was, however, much more regular in his habits than he had been for some time, spending most of the day in his studio, and the evening with his friend, Mesereau, who continued to instruct him in the art of cheating. It was only at rare intervals that he was seen in the club-house, and he never staid long, but contented himself with stepping in occasionally to meet his friends, Mourad-Bey among others.

The former prime-minister seemed to have reached the zenith of his fortunes, never had his star been more brilliant, than it was now. The sensational newspapers reported his every movement, and dilated upon his wealth and magnificence; the exact number of horses in his stables was given in print, with their pedigrees and names, and even the prices paid for them; when he gave a dinner-party, every dish was described in the morning papers, when he appeared at the theatre, the fact was heralded abroad—in short the King of the sharpers, had become also the King of Fashion.

Far from suspecting that all this notoriety and admiration would be apt to arouse envy, and

lead people to inquire into the sources of his colossal wealth, Mourad-Bey, with characteristic self-complacency, congratulated himself on his success, and threw his money about with ever increasing prodigality. Early in the winter he resolved to give an entertainment that would be long remembered. Every one was talking about it, and speculating on its magnificence; when Mourad accosted George de Bussine on the subject.

"You will give me the pleasure of your company, Count?" he asked.

"Certainly, I shall be most happy."

"And your charming daughter will grace my hall with her presence?"

"Susanne, your excellency? Oh no, she never goes to entertainments."

"Why not? The best people have accepted my invitations, and will bring their wives and daughters."

"My daughter does not care for society at all, pray do not urge me further."

After many more arguments and persuasions, Mourad added:

"If she declines to come I shall think that she bears malice because I did not succeed in getting the release of her friend from Melun. But I have not given up hope yet. I am sure that it will be an easy matter to buy some one of the minor officials of the prison, and then the doors will be

opened to him. I shall be glad to offer fifty thousand francs, or even a hundred thousand if necessary—I am determined to encompass the difficulty in one way or another. Tell your daughter that I will place my entire fortune at her disposal, or, if you prefer, we can keep the matter entirely between ourselves, until our object is accomplished. As to my fête, I shall expect to see you both—remember, your daughter will offend me grievously if she does not attend.”

George de Bussine had already conceived the idea of his brother escaping from prison, but he had not been able to keep his shallow mind on the matter long enough to arrive at any definite plan. But Mourad's words seemed to throw new light on the matter, and convert the vague hope into a possibility, and he resolved to speak to Susanne at once on the subject.

He went home directly, and finding his daughter all alone began telling her of his desire to see his brother at liberty.

“I think of him more than you imagine,” he said; “and I believe that I have at last hit upon an idea.”

“What is it?” she asked wonderingly, but when he told her that his plan was to bribe some one in the prison, she answered sadly:

“What would you bribe him with?”

"With money, of course, I think I can get some from a friend."

"Who is it?"

"Mourad-Bey."

She started to her feet at the name, and exclaimed excitedly,

"Papa, I beg that you will never mention that man to me again!"

"Why, what has he done?" asked George, astonished at her vehemence; but when she told him of Mourad's conduct at the time of his last visit, her father was transported with indignation.

"What a villain!" he cried; "and to think that I have shaken hands with him since then! You were wrong, Susanne, not to tell me before, I have not always done my duty by you, I confess, but I have certain rights, for I am your father."

"You were once," she murmured sadly, looking straight into his eyes.

"Ah, my child, you forget," he said, but she added quickly:

"I forget nothing, unfortunately, I cannot forget. But we need not speak of the past, for that concerns my uncle only—he has expiated it. I am thinking only of the present, of your broken vow, that vow which you made by the dead body of your wife—not content with torturing her during her life, you will not allow her to rest peacefully in her grave."

Her voice was low but agitated, and her father, bowing his head, listened to her in silence, as if powerless to speak.

“And what a time you have chosen to return to your old practices!” went on Susanne breathlessly, “just when your brother is most wretched. He is, the second time, accused unjustly and is thrust back into prison just when he thought to leave it, and be free once more—seven years more, seven long years, and yet he does not reproach you; he writes to me and tells me to be patient with you. Alas, I have disobeyed him, he who has never forgotten me—he only, is my father.”

Cæsarina, entering at that moment, the girl rushed up to her and throwing herself into her arms burst into bitter tears. Mrs. Petit-homme soothed her tenderly and then turning to the wretched father said sternly:

“You have made your child weep, and that is the only good action you have ever performed; her tears will do her good—leave her to me.”

He obeyed in silence, and going into his studio, walked the floor, absorbed in thought.

Toward night, Fatmah entered, but he did not hear nor see her, until she touched his shoulder softly, and then looking at his haggard face, she whispered:

“You are unhappy. Am I the cause?”

“No—my daughter.”

She? That is still worse. Tell me all—confide in me—it will do you good.”

And so, still pacing the floor wildly, he told her all. Told her of his passion for play, of his wife's death, of the vow he had made, and of his life in Africa; then, of his return to Paris thinking himself cured of his vice; of his relapse, owing to his love for her,—for Fatmah, his determination to make money, and of his daughter's reproaches.

When he ceased speaking, the Circassian said musingly:

“I never thought of your daughter—I merely obeyed Mourad as I had always done—he sent me here to you!”

“He told you to deceive me!” he cried.

“Yes,” she answered simply; “and I never knew why he did it until I discovered that he loved your daughter. I begin to understand it all.” She turned away from him and slowly left the room.

CHAPTER. III.

At two o'clock in the morning the brilliancy of Mourad-Bey's entertainment was at its height. All the guests had arrived and not one had yet had the courage to tear himself away from the splendors of the fête. The gorgeous rooms were full of dancers, and numberless domestics in their master's livery moved about carrying wines and ices. Those persons who passed through the grand halls and reached the gardens were fairly dazzled with the beauty of the scene. The whole place had been transformed into an immense conservatory or winter-garden. The guests found themselves suddenly transported to the tropics, and on every side was a luxuriant growth of enormous leaves and flowers of brilliant color. Here rose tall palm-trees from beds of delicate ferns, there a mass of dracenas was surrounded by a border of many hued begonias; while a little farther on was a great cluster of caladimus, over-shadowed by banana-trees loaded with fruit. Still farther on, near some superb Abyssinian euphorbians, was a grassy sward, enameled with the little red bells of numberless gloxinias. All these magnificent plants and trees which had been brought, at great expense, from the largest hot-houses in the neighborhood, mingled with the ordinary trees of the

garden, but the trunks of the latter were skilfully concealed by tropical climbing plants which seemed to have grown there naturally. Even the shrubs had been made to disappear under Indian bamboos, and from every out-spreading branch hung wonderful orchids, and great clusters of flowers—red, blue, and golden. The air of the garden was fragrant with a hundred sweet and penetrating, but delicate, odors, which seemed to come from distant lands, so undefinable and strange were they.

No chandeliers nor candelabras were visible, yet a soft brilliancy filled the place, for electric lights, carefully concealed by the foliage, diffused a fairy-like radiance. At the farthest end of the gardens, behind a grove of palm trees, a fine orchestra played the melodies of Schumann, Chopin and Mendelssohn, and the reveries of Weber; no one thought of dancing in this garden of Paradise, one was quite content to listen and gaze and inhale.

The owner of all this luxury and elegance strolled about in ordinary evening dress, doing the honors with his customary ease and grace of manner, and receiving compliments on every side, on the beauty and richness of his fête. And yet, in spite of the flattery and praise bestowed on him, he was discontented and restless, for the Count de Bussine and his daughter had not come. He

had thought to dazzle Susanne by the sight of his magnificence, and he was surprised to find that her father had ventured to disregard his wishes. He had but to say the word and George de Bus-sine would be completely at his mercy, and he vowed that if she did not come at all, he would go that very night to Sivasti and give the last instructions. The five sharpers whom the secretary employed were present at the ball, for Mourad had invited the other members of the club, and did not dare to leave them out, lest they should suspect Mourad-Bey of knowing their calling, in fact, of being the mysterious personage who watched them to closely.

Several rooms were devoted to cards, and the sharpers sat down to play willingly, for they said to themselves that here was an opportunity of making money without being obliged to share it equally with Sidi-Bou-Saïd.

Mesereau, who kept his promise not to play at all, either honestly or dishonestly, walked about among the waving palms, and at last stopped and joined a group of his acquaintances who were talking eagerly. After expressing the greatest admiration at the beauty of the scene, some one remarked that their host must be a man of very great wealth, and another answered that he had learned from a Tunisian of high rank who had been passing through Paris that the Prime min-

ister's property had all been confiscated by the Bey at the time of his disgrace, so that since his arrival in France he had received no income whatever from his own country.

"But he had amassed a large quantity of jewels and stones of priceless value, I heard," observed another person.

"Yes, but he did not bring them to France." In reply to the eager questioning of his friends, the speaker explained that during his last visit to Marseilles he had run against the captain of the steamer in which Mourad had embarked, with his secretary Sivasti, and a beautiful Circassian slave. This man recounted the adventure with the Arabs and the loss of the jewels. Every one was filled with amazement on hearing this tale, and no one could refrain from wondering where Mourad had got his great wealth.

"Perhaps he gambles," suggested some one; but the others exclaimed quickly that Mourad Bey never touched a card. "And yet," said another person thoughtfully, "he haunts the baccarat tables regularly, and spends very little time in any other part of a club-house." The conversation was now interrupted and the speakers separated, much to the disappointment of Mesereau, who found the subject one of the keenest interest. He had often seen Mourad watching him at baccarat, but had never for one instant suspected

that this mighty personage was the accomplice of Sidi-Bou-Saïd. Could the latter be Sivasti, the minister's secretary? As he sauntered on, absorbed in thought, he made his way mechanically to the card-rooms, and here another surprise awaited him.

He recognized four men whom he had seen at clubs, but with whom he was not acquainted, and as he stood watching the games his practised eye caught sight of regular and repeated cheating skilfully performed at the different tables by these four individuals. "What is the meaning of this?" he said to himself. "Are these men my fellow-workers in the employ of Mourad-Bey, and does he think to pay the expenses of his fête by dispoiling his guests? Does he wish to give with one hand and take with the other?"

The next day, Sivasti sent for Mesereau and ordered him to set his pupil to work at once. The latter objected, on the grounds that de Bus-sine was not yet sufficiently skillful to work without fear of detection. "And suppose he is detected?" asked Sivasti sharply, "that will not concern you, will it?"

"I should not like to see my pupil suffer failure, and besides I have no wish to injure Mr. de Bus-sine—" began Mesereau, but his listener interrupted him by saying that he was to do his employer's bidding without delay, and threatening

him with instant exposure and ruin if he did not obey. The two men argued the matter for some time, and at last parted angrily. Mesereau went at once to de Bussine and confided to him his suspicions, and in return the artist explained to his new friend all that had occurred concerning Mourad, Fatmah, and Susanne.

CHAPTER IV.

THE club-house which George de Bussine had so long frequented was more crowded than usual on the seventh of December, 187— Among others, were the young lawyer Lafleur and his friend Amelin, also Mesereau and de Bussine, while Mourad hovered about as was his custom, waiting for baccarat to begin.

The bank was soon put up at auction and Mesereau whispered to de Bussine, that now was his time.

“Are you sure that the three packs of cards the banker holds are ours?” asked George.

“Perfectly sure. I have just put them on the table and taken the others away. No one was looking, and you may play with perfect confidence.”

George then secured the bank and took his place at the table, and as he did so Mourad could

hardly repress a smile of satisfaction ; he saw that his plan was working well, and that he should soon have the father of Susanne completely in his power. The lawyer Lafleur was also pleased, for he knew that the count was a luckless player, and so he promised himself a fine harvest at his expense, and the four sharpers hastened to the table and threw down their money, feeling sure of victory. What was the surprise and dismay of every one present when the count won three times in succession, and showed no sign of wishing to yield his place.

“It cannot last,” said Lafleur nervously ; “he is proverbially unlucky,” and yet the banker continued to gather in money and counters until many of his opponents lost courage and ceased playing.

One or two small losses on the part of de Bussine, however, served to entrap them again, and all excepting the four sharpers returned to the charge with renewed hopes. The latter had discovered the secret, and stood watching de Bussine’s play with the keenest interest and admiration.

At last, the banker, by a brilliant stroke, won everything that his adversaries possessed, and the playing came necessarily to an end. A dead silence followed, and then the players began to leave the table, some in despair, some indiffer-

ently, others merely amazed, but de Bussine called out in a loud voice:

"Friends, do not go yet, I want to settle accounts with you."

They looked at him in silence, wondering what he meant, and he added carelessly:

"This money is yours, and each one of you may take what you have lost."

"What do you mean?" asked several voices, and the winner replied:

"I mean that I cannot keep your money, for I won it with marked cards, which were furnished me by my employer, Mourad-Bey."

All eyes were instantly turned upon the Tunisian, and then every one gathered round de Bussine in the greatest excitement, but Mourad stood perfectly still, stroking his moustache and gazing round him, with an air of profound astonishment; on the green table between him and his accuser was the great heap of counters, notes, and gold pieces. At last Lafleur, the lawyer, spoke.

"That is a very serious charge, and ought to be explained and proved," said he, and his words were echoed by a dozen voices.

"I am ready—listen, gentlemen," said de Bussine.

And then, in a quiet but distinct tone, he gave a detailed account of Mourad's flight from Tunis, of the ship-wreck, and the loss of the treasure,

furnishing, moreover, the names of his informants on the subject. Then he proceeded to explain the Tunisian's mode of operations since his residence in Paris, his complicity with his former secretary in employing sharpers to cheat at play, and share all their profits equally with him.

Having thus accounted for Mourad's constant appearance in the baccarat-rooms, de Bussine began to speak of himself, confessing that after having lost everything in gambling, he had exerted himself to acquire the methods of winning which were proposed to him by an agent of Mourad-Bey.

"To-night I have made my first attempt," he said in conclusion," and you have all seen the success of my efforts. I obeyed orders, I took the bank, I used the marked packs which had been placed on the table, and I ruined all my opponents. Only instead of dividing the spoils with Mourad-Bey, I am going to restore the money to you, gentlemen. The ten thousand francs with which I began to play, were furnished by my employer, and you may divide them among yourselves, or give them to the poor, as you prefer. I do not want to keep them, although as you all know, I lost my entire fortune here, four years ago."

A buzz of approbation followed his words, and then some one ordered Mourad to answer the charges brought against him.

"Mr. de Bussine has been pleased to make me the hero of a charming romance," he began slowly and with affected indifference and contempt, "but you will no doubt be glad to have the simple truth of the matter.

"I have always told you that no sharper could safely practice his infamous profession in my presence, for I should instantly detect him."

"That would not help us very much," said some one, "a king does not devour his own subjects."

"No, but sometimes his subjects devour him!" murmured "Audacity" with a grim smile.

The Tunisian, without heeding these interruptions, continued his explanation by saying that he had caught the banker in the act of cheating, and that all this pretended exposure was merely a blind on de Bussine's part to save himself from denunciation.

"I anticipated this attack," said the latter, calmly, and therefore wrote a letter to the president of the club telling him of the revelations I intended to make. Have you received my letter, sir?"

"Yes, half an hour ago," replied the president, who was a man of good position and universally esteemed, "but I have not found time to open it yet," and taking the missive from his pocket, he read it aloud.

"This establishes your innocence completely,"

he remarked, "but it does not prove anything against Mourad-Bey."

"I wrote to you, as well as to the presidents of other clubs, about a month ago," returned de Bussine, "warning you to put some private mark upon every bank-note paid out to winners at baccarat. If you have done this, an examination of Mourad's pocket book will no doubt prove the truth of my accusation." The Tunisian could not refuse to deliver up his bank-notes for inspection, and as they were easily identified by the managers of the card-room, not a doubt remained in the minds of the witnesses. Great excitement prevailed for several minutes, but when Mourad turned to leave the room the crowd made way for him, and he retreated slowly, caressing his long moustache and with the usual languid expression in his eyes.

Mesereau, in making his plans had foreseen that the hope of having their money returned to them would prevent the players from leaving before the drama was concluded, and de Bussine now proceeded to make the restitution he had promised. That done he received the warm thanks of all, and then the players took their places again, the bank has put up at auction, and the game went on.

CHAPTER. V.

MOURAD-BEY, wrapped in his fur pelisse, with a lighted cigar between his lips, walked slowly along the boulevard in the direction of the Madeleine. He did not know where he was going or what he was going to do, for he was dazed by the sudden and unexpected blow which had fallen upon him.

He was ruined, utterly ruined, fortune and honor both were gone, and yet he was not entirely overwhelmed, for his philosophy, or rather his Eastern fatalism, sustained him.

"That game is lost, I must try another," he said to himself, and then he wondered what measures the members of the club would take against him. Would they be contented with expelling him, or would they report the matter to the police? He decided to go and see Sivasti, and having now reached the Place de l'Opera, called to a cab-driver whom he had often employed. The man recognized him at once and expressed his sorrow at being already engaged.

"I have to go to Montmartre, rue Gabrielle, your excellency, to fetch a lady to Passy, rue du Ranelagh."

"Rue Gabrielle!" repeated Mourad quickly, "what number?"

"Fourteen," returned the man, "if yon want to go to Montmartre I can take yon at once."

"Who engaged you?" asked Mourad eagerly, for the address given was that of de Bussine's house.

"A young gentleman, who spoke with the English accent, your excellency. He is a handsome fellow, and has often engaged me before. He said he would not entrust the young lady to any one else."

Mourad knew that it must be Lionel Murdon, for he had lately seen him coming out of a house near Fatmah's in the rue du Ranelagh, and he instantly resolved to profit by the opportunity for revenge thus unexpectedly thrown in his way. "How much is he to pay you?" he asked of the driver.

"One *louis*, your excellency."

"Suppose I add twenty-five *louis* to it!"

"Twenty-five? I will take you anywhere——"

"No, that is not what I want. You will go to Montmartre and fetch the lady as you agreed; and you will take her to the rue du Ranelagh, only, instead of stopping at No. 32, you will drive into the court-yard of No. 48. The two houses are exactly alike, and in the darkness you can easily make a mistake."

"Of course," replied the man, "and indeed I

am not very sure that the young Englishman said No. 32—— perhaps it was 48 after all!”

“Very likely” said Mourad, “and in order to keep the latter number in your mind, take these five louis; and call at my house to-morrow for twenty more.”

The man whipped up his horses and set off at once, while Mourad taking another cab, drove with all speed to Fatmah’s abode, No. 48, rue du Ranelagh. On reaching the house he told the driver to wait as he was to take a lady into Paris, and then he went hurriedly into Fatmah’s presence. “I have come to ask a favor of you,” he said as she rose from a divan where she had fallen asleep, “I want to use this room for a few hours. Be good enough to go to my house in Paris where I will soon join you. There is a carriage waiting at the door.”

“Who are you going to receive here?” she asked.

“Sivasti, I met him a short time ago and made an appointment with him.”

“It will not be necessary for me to leave the house. I will remain in my own room and give up this one to you.”

“No, no, that will not do—you must go.”

“It is not Sivasti that you expect,” she said suddenly, “it is a woman.”

“Well, and suppose it is? Why should you ob-

ject? In Tunis, you were not the only woman in the house, were you?"

"No, but we are not in Tunis now—"

Mourad tried to conceal his impatience and said calmly, "This is a matter of vengeance, **Fatmah**, and you must not oppose me. I have been insulted, grossly insulted, and my very existence threatened. Chance has thrown a means of revenge in my way, and I intend to profit by it. You must obey me."

"Who insulted you?" she asked, and he replied,

"George de Bussine."

"You have revenged yourself on him beforehand," said Fatmah. "Through me you have made him suffer sufficiently already. You have caused him to lose his daughter's affections—" she stopped short as a new idea entered her mind, and then she cried suddenly, "Is it she you expect?"

He made no reply.

"It is!" she said, "I understood it all, but you shall not bring her here, I shall not go."

Mourad, unable to control himself any longer, started up furiously and cried, "Be careful **Fatmah**! Remember you are nothing but a slave, bought and paid for. I am your owner, and if you disobey me I will punish you."

Fatmah's eyes gleamed brilliantly as he spoke, and she panted for breath as she looked at him in silence. Then, after a long pause, she changed

her aspect suddenly, and gliding toward him she put one arm around his neck and whispered softly, "Is that woman lovelier than I am—do you love her better?"

He answered not and she continued sadly, "Be it so, then, I will obey you as I have always done—farewell!" she pressed her arm more closely round him, and when he exclaimed that something had pricked his neck she said, "It must have been the pins in my hair, pardon me—Farewell!"

As she left the room slowly and sadly, the sound of approaching carriage wheels was heard in the street outside.

CHAPTER VI.

THE seventh of December, 187—, so disastrous for Mourad-Bey, was an unusually lugubrious day in the prison at Melun. At five o'clock in the morning preparations were begun for the execution of Clopied, who had been condemned to death for the premeditated murder of Sagot, his fellow-prisoner. All the inmates of the prison were to witness the execution, and great excitement prevailed among the prisoners, when, at half-past six o'clock, the great bell rang and they were

all drawn up in lines in the long corridor. The guillotine had been erected in the open square in front of the prison, and a squadron of hussars, and a body of police were stationed near it. There was a heavy fog that morning hanging over the river and its shores, and the scaffold was only dimly lighted by the red lanterns which could hardly dispel the black shadows of the guillotine.

Lucian Lecomte gave little thought to the coming tragedy, for his friends had decided that this would be the best day for him to escape from the prison. The unwonted confusion produced by the execution, and the removal of all the guards and prisoners from the back part of the buildings, were calculated to make his flight an easy matter, especially as his fellow-worker. Armand had been taken ill and sent to the infirmary a few days before.

Cornelius Petit-homme had wished Lecomte to ask the superintendent's permission to absent himself from the painful scene of the execution; but this Lucian had refused to do, saying that he would not be willing to make the escape, if his flight was to compromise any one else, and that it would be most base of him to expose to censure a man who had taken such a friendly interest in him as Mr. Boulard had done. As it was, no one would be severely blamed for his flight, and the

only difficulty was for him to escape notice at the time that the prisoners were marched out to the scaffold.

As that moment drew near, Lecomte mingled with his companions instead of going as usual to the pump-room; but when the roll had been called, and, at a signal from the guard, the double files of men began to march out of the building, he contrived to slip away unperceived. A few seconds later he was on the roof and had seized hold of the telegraph wires; they bent and stretched with his weight, and for an instant he feared that he would fall between the high walls, whence escape would be utterly hopeless; but he succeeded in reaching the little courtyard, and here he found the long wooden beam promised him, which he placed against the gate, and scrambling he let himself down on the other side. The thick fog almost hid the river from his sight, but he soon saw a young man hurrying towards him. Without a word he followed the stranger to the water's edge, where lay a small boat, and the two men getting in, Lecomte lay down at the stern, while the other took up the oars and with a few strong strokes sent the boat out into the middle of the stream. In a short time the bridge and the last of the prison buildings had been passed, and as the fog showed no signs of lifting,

the two men in the boat were perfectly invisible from the shore.

"Mr. Lecomte," said the young man, without stopping his oars for an instant, "there is a suit of clothes under the seat next you. Put them on, please, as fast as possible, make yours into a bundle, tie them up with that cord which has a stone at one end and throw them overboard."

Lucian lost no time in doing as he was told, and it was with indescribable joy that he rolled up the hated uniform and cast it into the water; he was now clad in a suit of English cloth, loosely made and similar in style to that worn by his companion; he sat up in the stern of the boat, feeling like a new man, his eyes sparkling, and a smile upon his lips.

Suddenly, however, he caught sight of a large boat containing several men, which shot out from the shore and seemed about to bar the way. He gave himself up for lost, thinking that his flight had been discovered, and the bridge police telegraphed to stop him; the young boatman, sharing this suspicion, increased his speed, hoping to profit by the lightness of his boat, and just then one of the men called out:

"Take the middle arch—there is a barge foundered on this side!"

The great bridge of Corbeille was now seen emerging from the fog, and the little boat, ac-

according to the warning received, passed under in safety and soon left it far behind. Then, for the first time, the oarsman stopped rowing and letting the boat drift with the current, said :

"Mr. Lecomte, I am Lionel Murdon. I think you have heard of me. I have had the happiness of knowing your niece for nearly four years. She begs you to place entire confidence in me."

Lucian held out his hand without speaking, and the other grasped it warmly.

"I have no idea how this voyage will end, but I thank you from my heart for what you have done," said Lecomte.

"Do not thank me," replied Lionel, "I am only too happy to be allowed to help a man who has practised such heroic self-sacrifice."

"She has told you," cried Lucian.

"She tells me everything," said the young man simply, and then with his eyes fixed upon his listener, he added :

"We love each other."

He took up his oars again, and Lucian, a little troubled by his last words, was silent for several minutes.

"Are we going to Paris?" he said at last.

"Yes, a large city is always the best place to hide in, and besides, Miss Susanne is so anxious to see you."

"Can I see her to day?" asked Lucian eagerly.

"Yes, it is arranged that as soon as we reach the city, I am to send a cab to bring her to a small house that I have hired in the Rue de Ranelagh, where you will have to stay for some time."

"But if we do not reach Paris until night, how can Susanne come all the way from Montmartre alone in a hired vehicle; do you think it is quite safe?"

"I thought of that," said Lionel, "and tried to persuade Miss Susanne to come during the day and await your arrival, but she did not wish to come to my house until she was sure that her uncle was there, and I felt bound to respect her scruples."

"You were right," said Lucian quietly, and he could not help observing how the young man's face brightened, and his frank blue eyes were filled with tenderness, while he was speaking of Susanne.

All day long Lionel Murdon rowed steadily, without seeming to feel fatigued. He pulled a long regular stroke, which, without betraying any haste, sent the boat swiftly down the stream. His chest was broad, and his bare arms strong and muscular, and they plied the oars with as little effort as if the journey had just begun.

"Let me row," said Lucian, "while you rest a little."

"No, I am not tired. I have often rowed all day long on the rivers and lakes of Ireland."

After sunset the fog grew thicker so that the fugitives were often in danger of running against the large masses of timber floating down the river, and as the banks were still invisible, they could form no definite idea of their own whereabouts. Toward evening however, they recognized the lights of Paris, and heard the distant hum of the great city, and soon after the outline of the bridges came in view and warned them to be cautious. After proceeding some distance farther, Lionel Murdon suddenly left the channel, and ran under the shadow of the schoolship, and then by means of a boathook he caught hold of an empty barge which was lying at anchor, and the two men leaped from one boat to another until they reached the shore. Just as they had climbed up the side of the wharf, they were accosted by two policemen, who asked what they had been doing.

"We have only been out rowing," replied Lionel, speaking French with an exaggerated English accent, and the officers exclaimed suspiciously:

"Out rowing at this time of night in December? Where do you live?"

"At the Grand Hotel," said Lionel. "We set out soon after luncheon and did not expect to be caught in a fog. We are ready for our dinner, I can tell you," he added laughingly, and taking his

companion's arm, he drew him away, while one policeman said to the other :

"These Englishmen are all alike, they never stop for the weather."

Lionel and Lucian now hastened to take a cab, directing the driver to the "Grand Hotel," and on arriving on the Boulevard des Capucines they got out, and when the driver was out of sight they walked toward the Madeleine. It was now half-past eleven o'clock, and two men in their long overcoats, the collars turned up as if on account of the dampness, did not attract any particular attention.

While Lionel was looking around for another cab, a voice behind him said suddenly :

"Do you want to go to Passy, sir?" and turning quickly he saw a cab-driver whom he had often employed, and hastened to arrange with him for the conveyance of Miss de Bussine from Montmartre to Rue de Ranelagh. He then went to his house with Lucian Lecomte, while the cabman stopping for a moment at the Place de l'Opera, was accosted by Mourad-Bey, who made a slight alteration in Lionel's arrangements, as we have already seen.

CHAPTER VII.

EVER since the morning, Susanne had been a prey to agonizing doubts and fears; at ten o'clock she sat down at the window and watched the passers by anxiously, dreading that Lionel Murdon would return to tell her that the plan of escape had failed; but toward noon she began to hope, and at one o'clock her joy was complete, for she knew that her uncle must have succeeded in leaving the prison. Soon, however, fresh doubts rose in her mind; perhaps both men had been arrested before getting into the boat, or perhaps they had met with an accident on the river, the fog was so heavy; a thousand fears tormented her, and when evening came she went to the window every five minutes, and throwing it open looked out eagerly. Why did no carriage come for her, what could have happened, was she doomed to pass the night as she had passed the day? At last, a cab turned the street-corner, she watched it coming and wondered anxiously whether it would pass the house as so many others had done. But no, it stopped before her door; she waited a minute, but no one got out, and Susanne, with a cry of joy, threw on a long dark cloak with a deep hood, and hurried out to the carriage.

The driver took her to the Rue du Ranelagh,

and into the court-yard of No. 48, and as soon as she had stepped out he drove away quickly, while the door of the house was opened promptly, and the young girl ushered in. She found herself in a square vestibule which was lighted by hanging lamps, but the servant had disappeared and no one was visible. She stood disconsolate, knowing that if her uncle and Lionel were there they would have come to greet her, and then, seeing a door standing wide open, she went into a large room. What was her astonishment to find that the walls were hung with heavy draperies, and the floor covered with thick soft rugs, while in the middle of the apartment was a long divan of costly silk to match the walls, and scattered about the room were Turkish cushions made of the richest materials! This did not in the least answer the description which Lionel had given her of the house. Where could she be, what mistake had been made? She turned hastily to retrace her steps, but the door had been closed behind her, and just as she put her hand on the knob she heard the key turned from the other side. Terror stricken at finding herself locked in, she looked round for a window, but there was none! The room was lighted by means of long narrow apertures at a height of nine feet from the floor. The solitude and death-like silence of the place appalled her, and she began to call for help, but her voice

could not penetrate the heavy draperies, but seemed to return to her like an echo, and the air was loaded with perfumes that were sweet yet stifling. At last, wearied with calling, she stood silent for a minute, and was startled to see the hangings at the other end of the room parted suddenly.

Mourad-Bey came slowly toward her with a smile of triumph on his lips. He was very pale and his limbs seemed to tremble as he walked, and when he reached the centre of the room he stopped, and looked at her fixedly as he said: "You see it is useless for you to call, your voice can not be heard beyond this room. Your driver, by mistake, no doubt, brought you here instead of to No. 48, where Mr. Lionel Murdon is awaiting you. I am delighted, however, to be able to profit by the man's error."

Susanne's only reply was, "Open this door at once," and as he shook his head, she asked, "Why should you keep me here against my will?"

"For two reasons," he answered, "first, because I love you madly, and second, because I want to be revenged upon your father, who has this very night insulted me grossly."

"Never has insult been so well deserved!" she cried, raising her head.

"You think so? Well, now you are in the power of the man who has received the insult; you can

not escape him. You will be obliged to listen while he tells you of his love. This time no one will come to your rescue." She did not answer, but leaned heavily against the door, with her hands clasped, and her eyes fixed on the ground, her form concealed by the dark cloak, and the hood half covering her golden hair, while the brightly-colored silken hangings made a brilliant background to the picture. Mourad looked at her in silence, then took a few steps forward, but gradually his limbs lost their power and he could move no farther; his death-like pallor increased, and at last his knees gave way and he sank powerless upon a cushion.

The next instant Susanne heard the door opening behind her, and some one taking hold of her arm, drew her into the vestibule.

When Mourad looked up again Susanne was gone, and in her place stood Fatmah in her oriental dress.

"You here!" he said, angrily.

"Yes," she answered; "I have saved your intended victim, and now I have come to die with you."

"Die!" he repeated; "I have only been overcome by the heavy perfumes of this room, but I am better now, I can stand——"

"You cannot!" she said,

"I can, I shall!" cried Mourad-Bey; all my life I have been able to do whatever I wished."

"Try to rise," she said calmly, and the man pressing his arms against the cushions made vain efforts to regain his feet. His legs were as if paralyzed, and he was powerless to move—a convulsive shiver shook his whole frame, and his teeth chattered audibly.

"What is the matter with me?" he groaned.

"I will tell you," she said in a low tone; "a few minutes ago, just as you were sending me away in order to receive another woman here, I put my arm around your neck and pricked you with a pin; the point had been steeped in a deadly poison, which I brought from the East; it is a poison which paralyzes the body, and the only suffering it produces is that of the mind—the kind of suffering which you have long inflicted upon me, Mourad. When we were in Tunis you often told me that you loved none but me, and I believed you, and returned your love with passionate devotion; I had rivals—I knew it, and suffered in silence, for I was only a slave, and it was the custom of our country; but one night you came and said to me 'I am going to burn down my palace, and drive away this troop of women, you only I will take with me to Europe, and you shall never leave me, for I love you alone'—my heart overflowed with joy at those words, for now you

would be my own at last; but alas, when we reached Paris my joy was turned to bitterness, for I discovered that I was nothing more to you than an accomplice. You made me useful to aid you, in your plans, and minister to your vanity. You made of my house a harem like that in Tunis—I am tired of suffering, Mourad, so I have killed you, although I love you still in spite of all, and my only thought now, is to die beside you!”

He heard her, but he could not speak. The poison was coursing slowly through his veins. His face was contorted, the eyes were blood-shot, and the breath coming in quick gasps.

The terrible sight had no terrors for Fatmah; she drew from her hair a long pin with a golden head and a steel point, turned up the left sleeve of her tunic, and without hesitation plunged the pin into her arm. Then she drew a paper from her bosom and fastened it with the same pin to the silken cover of the divan. On the paper were the following words:

“I have killed my master and myself with this steel point, which is steeped in the poisonous *Ourari*.”

Then she lay down at Mourad's feet, and fixed her eyes upon his face watched him die, whilst awaiting her own death.

CHAPTER VIII.

GEORGE DE BUSSINE read an account in the evening paper of the finding of the dead bodies of Mourad-Bey and his Circassian slave. At first he was filled with horror and despair, on reflecting that the beautiful object of his adoration was snatched away from him forever. For months he had had no thought for any one but her—he had lived and breathed for her alone; even his brother and his daughter had been forgotten. For a time he seemed to have been stunned by the cruel blow, and then gradually his better nature began to assert itself, and he arose as if from a long sleep, and was able to see things in their true light. Fatmah was but a memory, and his neglected duties lay clear and distinct before him. He heard again his child's reproaches and saw her tears, he thought of his brother in prison paying the penalty of his own guilt, and he made a stern resolve to devote his life henceforth to reparation and self sacrifice. He rushed from his studio, went across the garden into the house, and up to his daughter's room. It was empty—but he heard a slight noise in the adjoining chamber, and going toward the door, opened it softly and looked in. The sight that met his gaze made him think for an instant that the last five years had

been a dream and that he was actually in the presence of his dying wife. Nothing in the room had changed since that last night when he came home after gambling away the money stolen from his brother's safe. The furniture, the pictures, the hangings, were all the same, the two large candlesticks stood on the mantel-piece and a dimly burning night-light was on the table. Beside the bed as before was his brother Lucian, who seemed plunged in grief, and on the bed lay a silent motionless form, and a pair of feverish eyes rested on his face. George de Bussine thought he saw Henriette before him, for there was the same expression in the eyes, and putting his hand to his forehead he made an effort to collect his senses. He did not venture nearer to the bed, but his brother rose, came towards him, and led him to Susanne, and kneeling by his daughter's side he took her fevered hand in his and wept. After a few minutes, Lucian whispered:

"She cannot bear this, come with me."

The two men went into the next room, where Lucian answered his brother's anxious questions regarding Susanne's illness.

On leaving Mourad's house she had found her way to that of Lionel Murdon, where in a short time she welcomed her uncle and his guide; but when the first joy of the meeting was over, her strength succumbed to the long mental strain to

which she had been subjected and the varied agitations of the last two days. Hitherto her eagerness and strength of purpose had kept her up, but when her aim was accomplished, and she saw her uncle free once more, her nervous system gave way to the fever which had been consuming her strength. Lucian and Lionel were alarmed at seeing her flushed face and gleaming eyes, and wished her to go to bed at once, and on her entreating him to let her lie down on the bed in which her mother died, Lucian forgot all prudence, sent for a carriage and took her back to the house at Montmartre while Lionel hastened for a doctor.

“We feared at first that it was brain-fever,” said Lucian, “but her pulse is quieter now, and her temperature not so high.”

After a long pause George de Bussine asked his brother if he had been discharged from Melun, and when he heard of all that had occurred he trembled as he thought that his brother might yet be found and carried back to prison, but was somewhat reassured on being reminded that Lucian’s relationship with himself was entirely unknown.

“But did no one see you come into this house?” he asked after a moment.

“Yes, your servant, but she mistook me for you, and has not yet found out her mistake.”

"We are certainly very much alike," said George, looking at his brother thoughtfully; "at least in outward appearance."

At that moment Susanne's voice was heard calling feebly for her father.

"Go to her," said George; "it is you she wants, not me."

A week later the police made a raid on a low gambling house which had long been under surveillance. Among the persons arrested there was a middle-aged man with shaven face and short hair who gave his name as August Fisher, saying that he had just come from the country, but as his manners and accent were evidently Parisian, and he gave confused and contradictory answers to the questions put to him. He was looked upon with suspicion, and having assaulted and resisted one of the officers, was sent to police headquarters. He had hardly entered the place when one of the Inspectors exclaimed:

"Why that is Lucian Lecomte who escaped last week from Melun."

He was afterwards confronted with Superintendent Boulard, who looked at him searchingly for several minutes, asked him a few questions, and then sent for the photograph of Lecomte, which had been taken five years ago when he first entered Melun. A comparison of the picture with the supposed August Fisher established his identity

beyond a doubt, and he was condemned to solitary confinement for three months.

CHAPTER IX.

LUCIAN LECOMTE and his niece had been living in London for six months with Mrs. Petite-homme as housekeeper, but Cornelius had remained in Paris, and profiting by the advice of Lucian, who was a member of the London Exchange, continued to add to the riches in his strong box.

Lionel Murdon came to the quiet little house in London every day, for Susanne had at last yielded to his unchanging devotion, and the young people were engaged. Cæsarina promised to buy herself a new gown to wear at the wedding, but it was thought that after the ceremony it would be put away carefully, and that Susanne would inherit it together with the two million francs.

George de Bussine had not been heard of since a few days after his brother's escape. The latter at last received information that one of the prison officials at Melun had said that Lucian Lecomte had been retaken a week after his escape, and being put into a cell had become demented; he spent his time in playing imaginary games at baccarat,

moving his hands as if dealing cards, exclaiming occasionally, "stakes, gentlemen!" and weeping piteously over his supposed losses.

Then Lucian knew that George had allowed himself to be mistaken for his brother, for the purpose of facilitating the latter's escape from France, and of expiating his own guilt. After some delay, the harmless lunatic was released from prison, and brought to London, where the tender care of Lucian and Susanne gradually restored him to his senses, and he soon after died in his daughter's arms. Meserean, the reformed sharper retired into the bosom of his family, as he had desired, but his fellow-workers continued to practise their profession for their own benefit only.

As to Sivasti, he escaped from France soon after Mourad's death, and returned to Tunis, where he opened a café and conducted a flourishing business.

THE END.

